

SUPER BOWL XLI
COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

Sports Illustrated

PRESENTS

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PEYTON MANNING

INDIANAPOLIS
COLTS
WORLD CHAMPIONS

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COMPILED BY DAVID SABINO

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY SIMON BRUTY

LINEUP PHOTOGRAPH BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Sports Illustrated

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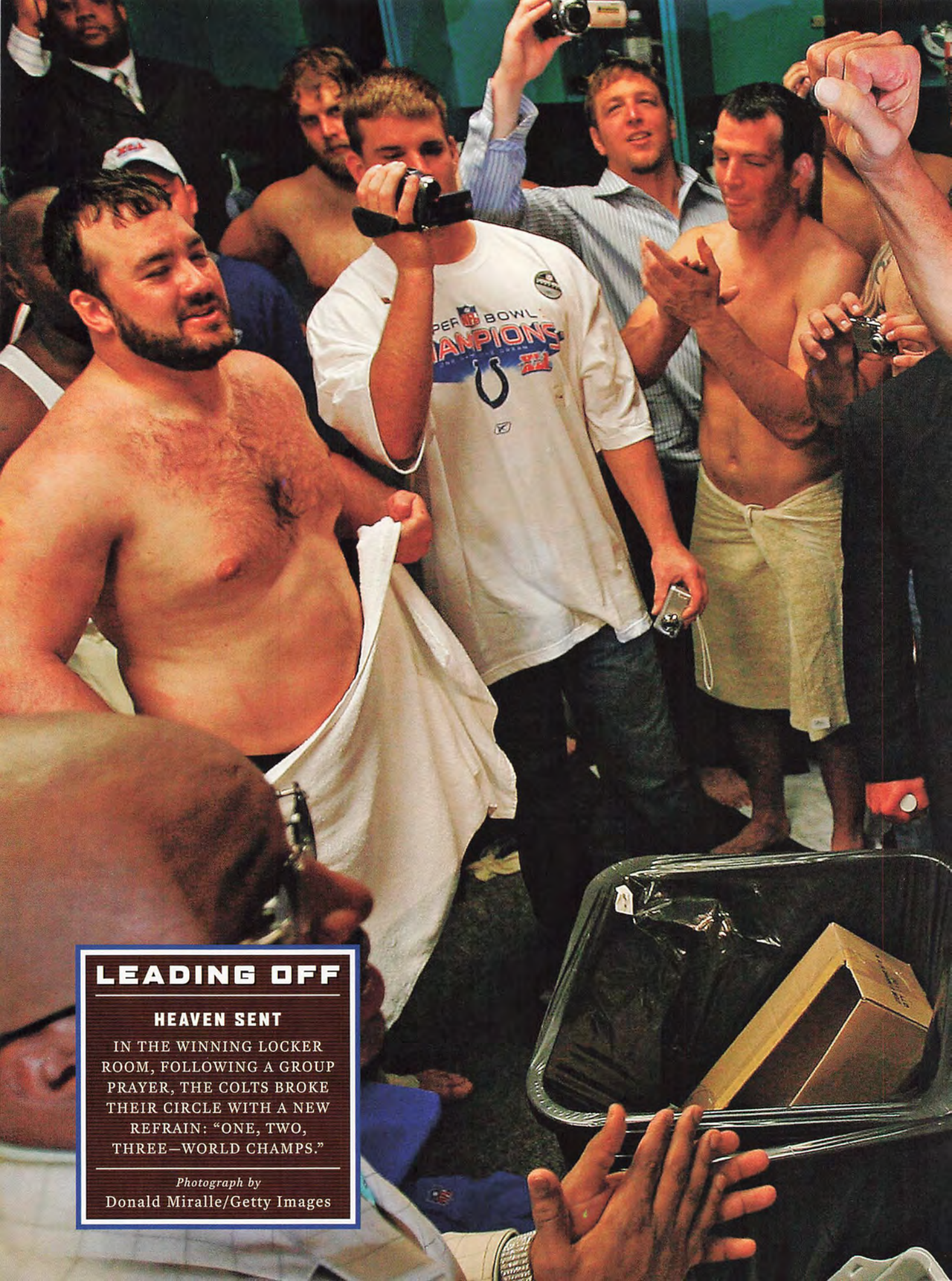
A photograph of several Indianapolis Colts players in their white and blue uniforms on a football field. In the foreground, a player with jersey number 78 is running towards the camera. To his left, another player with jersey number 74 is also running. In the background, a player with jersey number 59 is visible, and another player with jersey number 32 is in the center. The players are wearing white helmets with the Colts logo. Large blue and white flags are visible in the background.

LEADING OFF

ONE FRISKY COLT

LINEBACKER CATO JUNE, WHO WOULD HAVE SEVEN TACKLES AGAINST THE BEARS, KICKED UP HIS HEELS AS INDY TOOK THE FIELD FOR SUPER BOWL XLI.

Photograph by
Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

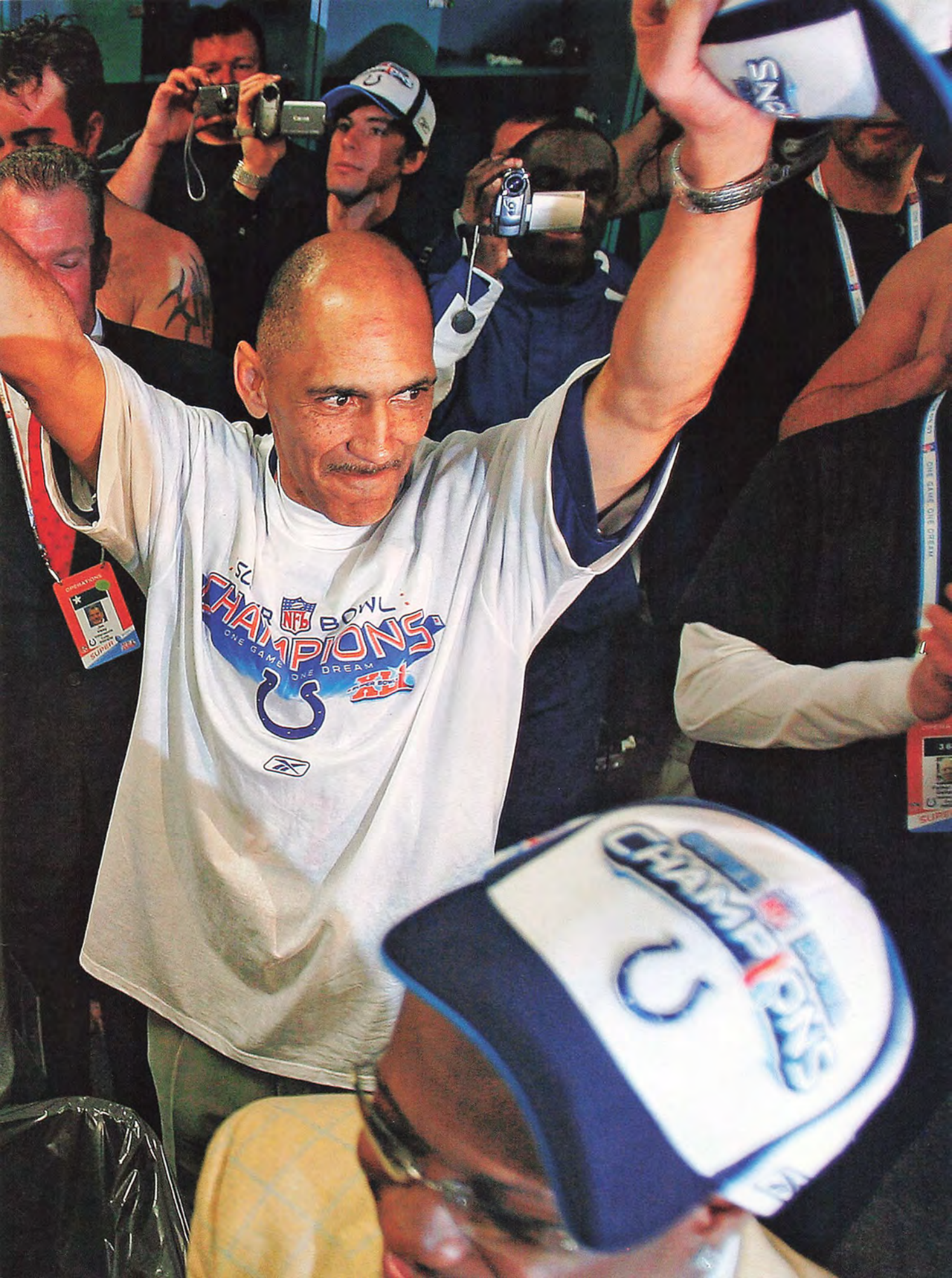


LEADING OFF

HEAVEN SENT

IN THE WINNING LOCKER ROOM, FOLLOWING A GROUP PRAYER, THE COLTS BROKE THEIR CIRCLE WITH A NEW REFRAIN: "ONE, TWO, THREE—WORLD CHAMPS."

Photograph by
Donald Miralle/Getty Images





LEADING OFF

TRUE BLUE

WITH THE INDIANAPOLIS
POWER & LIGHT CO.
BUILDING AS A BACKDROP,
FANS IN DOWNTOWN
INDIANAPOLIS CELEBRATED
THEIR SHINING MOMENT.

Photograph by
Darron Cummings/AP



MY BLUE

LONG AFTER THEY SET OUT FOR THE HOOSIER STATE,

IF MEMORY serves, I had gone to my local Hills department store in southern Indiana that fall afternoon in 1985 in search of bubble gum and batteries. As I walked into the store, I passed an athletic-looking man, clearly bored beyond belief, seated alone at a display table. He looked faintly familiar, and I paused briefly. He shot up out of his seat, hand extended. "Hi, I'm Mike Pagel of the Indianapolis Colts!"

I looked down at a stack of glossies and realized that, much to my surprise, Pagel was there at my hometown Hills! In the middle of his season! To sign autographs! With no

was at the height of his powers. Up north, Notre Dame was captivating fans. The Indianapolis 500 was still the biggest event in auto racing.

Indiana's NFL fans had never complained about driving a few hours to Chicago—the city that always seemed to dwarf



WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP: THE VANS LEAVE BALTIMORE IN 1984; LATE OWNER IRSAY; DICKERSON DASHES AND

line to move along, I, a high school student at Bloomington North High School, chatted amiably with a starting NFL quarterback for 15 minutes or so. In retrospect, it probably marked the first time I interviewed a pro athlete. If nothing else, it added a twist to my errand running. "Try to make it to a game this season!" Pagel exclaimed as I left the store.

That's how bad it was for the Colts those first few years in the heartland. The franchise left Baltimore under cover of darkness early on March 29, 1984, everything but Johnny Unitas's chin strap thrown into an armada of Mayflower moving vans. Unionized Paul Reveres, the midnight riders were told to pilot their vans west and not stop until they saw cornstalks. But upon arrival in Indianapolis the team was met with general indifference. Down south, Bob Knight

our entire state—or to Cincinnati for a game. A new baseball team? That would've been cool. But who needed a football team, especially one that played in the Hoosier Dome, a blight on the Indy skyline that looked, at least from my high school perspective, like nothing so much as a giant zit in need of popping. Even the franchise's charm offensive—the kind that had the starting QB spending an afternoon at Hills in Bloomington—did little to capture the locals' hearts, much less imaginations.

Compounding the problems, those early Colts teams were simply awful. The Colts went 12–36 during the franchise's first three seasons in Indy. If you could distill those abysmal years to a single scene, it came late in a game on Oct. 26, 1986, against the Dolphins. The Colts' head coach, Rod

FROM LEFT: LLOYD PEARSON/THE BALTIMORE SUN/AP; THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR/THE INDIANAPOLIS NEWS (AP); SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; RONALD G. ROOPE; NFL/WHITEHALL.COM; CHARLIE WEE/THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR/AP

H E A V E N

THE COLTS HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED |||| by L. Jon Wertheim

Dowhower, became so excited about a possible game-winning drive that he slipped and split his pants. Indianapolis didn't score, and the coach left the field with a towel draped around his waist. *Colts*, the joke went, was an acronym: Count On Losing This Sunday. As a matter of ritual, Indy musician Duke Tumatote went on the popular *Bob & Tom* radio show every Monday and sang updated lyrics to his mournful blues ballad, *Lord Help Our Colts*.

But attitudes toward the Colts gradually changed, triggered by a convergence of factors. The team improved

By the time Indianapolis drafted a certain drawing, fair-haired quarterback from Tennessee, in 1998, the Colts had supplanted the Hoosiers, Pacers and Boilermakers as the state's team of choice. Indiana, a fiercely red state, was all but hemorrhaging Colts blue. And in many ways the Colts' ascent refracted larger cultural shifts taking place in the state. Bob Knight had become an increasingly polarizing figure and eventually hightailed it to Texas. We were transitioning from an agricultural state to a leader in biotech and life sciences. Indianapolis—India-no-place, no more—



FLASHES; PAGEL UNDER CENTER; AND THE HOUSE THAT PEYTON BUILT—LUCAS OIL STADIUM, SET TO OPEN IN 2008.

steadily, traded for stars on the order of Eric Dickerson—suffice it to say, a better running back than sideline reporter—and even began making the postseason. (Or, as former coach Jim Mora calls them, the *playoffs*, *PLAYOFFS*?) Eventually we stopped feeling like mistresses, unwilling to commit our hearts fully. Our guilt over cuckolded Baltimore abated. So had the fear that the team would eventually leave us, too.

If the community embraced the franchise, the Colts hugged back. Consider owner Robert Irsay. He came to Indy with the reputation of a heartless misanthrope, a man who had dumped his wife of 39 years without so much as a phone call. Yet when Irsay died in 1997, he was hailed as a local philanthropist, a man who often let Hoosier charities hold benefits on his estate. (Indiana can have that effect on you.)

became an appealing headquarters site for multinational companies. As Indiana was thriving and evolving, it was only fitting that the football team representing the state was doing likewise.

The franchise once reduced to dispatching players to department stores to troll for fans will open the 2008 season in the nearly \$700 million Lucas Oil Stadium, a facility funded largely by the state. The Super Bowl triumph—over Chicago, no less—was the last stitch, embedding the Colts in Indiana's tapestry.

Lord help our Colts? Nah. Let Him turn his attention to other teams now. □

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED senior writer L. Jon Wertheim is the author of *Transition Game: How Hoosiers Went Hip-Hop*.

THE 2006 SEASON IN P I C T

PERFECT AT HOME, THE COLTS WON A FOURTH



MANNING VS. MANNING

Peyton and brother Eli made NFL history in the 2006 season opener

ON SUNDAY night, Sept. 10, Olivia Manning will be upstairs in a luxury suite at Giants Stadium, part of a sellout crowd watching two of her sons make history: Peyton, 30, and Eli, 25, will become the first brothers to start at quarterback in the same NFL game. "It's kind of exciting to be part of football history," Olivia says. "I don't want anybody to say, 'Oh, poor Mrs. Manning.' This is a great thing," Olivia smiles, but should we believe her? After the game one of her boys will be miserable. "It's not easy to be around either of them after a loss," she says. "Your heart just hurts for them."

Neither son is thrilled about discussing the uncomfortable circumstances: One will jump-start his season at the other's expense. It is why, as eldest brother Cooper says, Peyton and Eli "seem to have developed

URES

STRAIGHT AFC SOUTH TITLE

Compiled by Richard Deitsch



GAME I
SEPTEMBER
10

AT EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.
COLTS 26
NEW YORK GIANTS 21

FLYING START

Though the focus was understandably on Peyton and Eli Manning—the brothers combined for 523 yards passing and three touchdowns—the difference was four Adam Vinatieri field goals and this one-yard touchdown plunge by Dominic Rhodes.

Photograph by
David Bergman

a case of lockjaw" in recent months, and the flow of football information between them has dried up. "Before, I would study [Peyton] on film and ask him questions about what he saw and compare notes about other defenses," Eli says. "That's all stopped." At dinner with his two NFL sons one night over the summer, Archie Manning asked about LaVar Arrington, the Giants' newly acquired linebacker. "He's a good guy," Eli answered, "and he's going to give us some big rushes. I think we'll use him . . ." Eli stopped; Peyton had pulled out a Sharpie and was pretending to take notes on a napkin. All three men cracked up. "The next night we were at a friend's house," Archie says, "and the NFL Network was showing a Chiefs-Giants game from last year. The guys in the Giants' secondary were miked, and on the sideline they were talking

strategy and calling out specific numbers. All of a sudden the TV went off, and Eli was standing there with the remote, half smiling."

If this sibling rivalry must play out in our living rooms, so be it—but no football game is going to alter the Manning family fabric. Late last spring Archie and Peyton met in Las Vegas for a speaking engagement and entertained questions from the audience. A woman took the microphone and asked Archie, "Who do you like best, Peyton or Eli?"

A hush fell over the room. "Actually," Archie replied, "Olivia and I like Cooper better than both of them, because he's got the grandchildren."

—Michael Silver

Reprinted from SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, September 11, 2006



GAME 2
SEPTEMBER

17

AT INDIANAPOLIS

TEXANS
COLTS

24
43

CATCH OF THE DAY

Brandon Stokely's 10-yard touchdown reception was one of three TD passes on the day by Peyton Manning. In the game Manning threw for 400 yards and broke Johnny Unitas's franchise record of 2,796 career completions; the Colts racked up 515 yards of total offense.

Photograph by
Brian Spurlock/US PRESSWIRE





Wilkins returns it 82 yards

HOW THE SOUTH WAS WON

A win over rival Jacksonville provided much-needed breathing room

IN THE eight months since their 2005 season ended, the Jacksonville Jaguars had reason to believe they might finally be ready to overtake the Colts in the AFC South. Indy had lost All-Pro tailback Edgerrin James to Arizona, while Jacksonville's already stingy defense was bolstered by the signing of cornerback Brian Williams and the return of safety Donovan Darius. The Jaguars opened the '06 season by beating the highly touted Cowboys 24-17 and bullying the Super Bowl champion Steelers 9-0.

But for the Jaguars, no game is as defining as the one against division-rival Indianapolis, and after a 21-14 loss to the Colts on Sept. 24, they're still looking up at Indy, the dominant force in the AFC South. "When the game is over and we have a W, then we're getting closer [to the Colts]," Jacksonville



GAME 3
SEPTEMBER
24

AT INDIANAPOLIS

| | |
|---------|----|
| JAGUARS | 14 |
| COLTS | 21 |

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

An unconventional win: Terrence Wilkins scored on an 82-yard punt return, and Peyton Manning *ran* for a TD. Though the Jags rushed for 191 yards, cornerback Marlin Jackson (28) and linebacker Gary Brackett toughened up here on Fred Taylor.

Photograph by
David E. Klutho

safety Deon Grant said. "We don't believe in playing them close. As long as we don't get that W, they're running things in our division."

Anchored by Pro Bowl tackles Marcus Stroud and John Henderson, the Jaguars' stifling defense turned Indy's attempted jaunts up the middle into the equivalent of an escape attempt from Alcatraz; James's replacements, Dominic Rhodes and Joseph Addai, combined for only 63 yards on 17 carries. And Peyton Manning often looked discombobulated as he completed 14 of 31 for 219 yards.

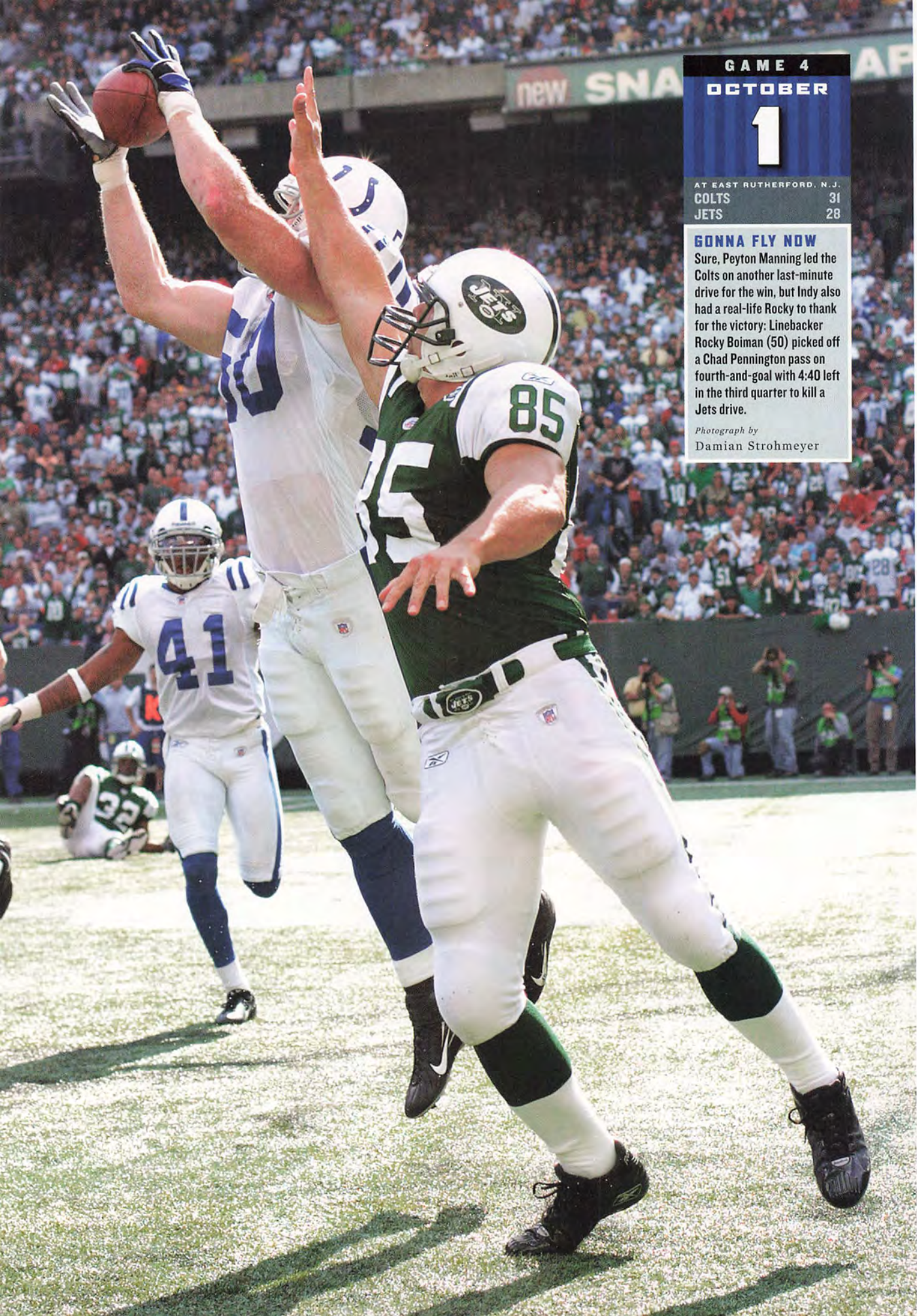
Yet the Colts found new ways to torment their rivals. Early in the second quarter Terrence Wilkins returned a punt 82 yards for a touchdown to tie the game at seven, and with 8:35 left Manning adroitly faked a handoff to

Addai before scampering to his right, untouched, two yards into the end zone for a 21-7 lead, all but sealing the victory. It was Manning's first rushing touchdown since 2002.

Asked what the Colts got out of the win, Indy defensive end Dwight Freeney said, "Separation." Indy's last loss within the division came on Oct. 24, 2004—to the Jaguars. And close outcomes against Jacksonville have become old news for the Colts. Indianapolis has won four of its last five against the Jaguars, but the average margin in those five games is a touchdown. "Typical Colts-Jaguars game," said Manning after Indy's win.

—Nunyo Demasio

Reprinted from SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, October 2, 2006



GAME 4

OCTOBER

1

AT EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.

| | |
|-------|----|
| COLTS | 31 |
| JETS | 28 |

GO ONNA FLY NOW

Sure, Peyton Manning led the Colts on another last-minute drive for the win, but Indy also had a real-life Rocky to thank for the victory: Linebacker Rocky Boiman (50) picked off a Chad Pennington pass on fourth-and-goal with 4:40 left in the third quarter to kill a Jets drive.

Photograph by
Damian Strohmeyer



GAME 5

OCTOBER

8

AT INDIANAPOLIS

TENNESSEE
COLTS

13
14

SURROUND SOUND

The Colts improved to 5-0 thanks to yet another fourth-quarter drive. The defense was leaky against the run, but strong safety Mike Doss and defensive tackle Raheem Brock (79) were steely here against the Titans' rookie running back LenDale White (25).

Photograph by Sandra Dukes/
WireImage.com



ANOTHER LEAP FORWARD

The Colts produced 452 yards of offense (here, running back Dominic Rhodes soars over the Redskins' line) including one of Peyton Manning's best days of the season: The Indy QB completed 25 of 35 with four touchdowns and a passer rating of 140.4. He threw three TD passes in the third quarter.

Photograph by Andy Lyons/Getty Images

GAME 6

OCTOBER

22

AT INDIANAPOLIS

REDSKINS
COLTS

22
36



GAME 7

OCTOBER

29

AT DENVER

COLTS
BRONCOS

34
31

MR. CLUTCH

Has the NFL ever seen a more money kicker than Adam Vinatieri? The ice-in-his-veins free-agent signee, acquired by Indy to win games such as this one, here nailed his 19th game-winner in the final minute of regulation or in overtime. It was his fourth field goal of the game.

Photograph by Robert Beck



Wayne had 10 catches.

BOOTING THE BRONCOS

A last-minute Manning drive, a Vinatieri kick and another 7-0 start

"MAN, I'M hungry," Reggie Wayne declared. The wideout had just ordered a hearty Kansas City strip at Sullivan's, an Indy steak house, but what he craved was a tougher part of the cow—some leather. "Everyone wants the football, and when we don't get it we get mad. Every Monday somebody on the offense is walking around with his lip pulled down. Right now that guy is me."

Welcome to Peyton Manning's world, where feeding footballs to famished skill players is a full-time job. Nobody does it better—as the All-Pro quarterback reminded the world in leading Indy to a 34-31 win over the Broncos three days later at Invesco Field. "The nice thing about our guys is, if they don't get catches, there's no press conference," said Manning. "We talk about it, and we move on."

The talk Manning had with his offense with 18 seconds left in the first half



may not have been overly profound, but the transformation it sparked was impressive. His speech came in the huddle as Indy, trailing 14-6, prepared to run out the clock at its own 14-yard line. Indy had been subdued in the first two quarters, settling for a pair of field goals after drives of 8:08 and 6:06. "We're killing ourselves," Manning barked. "The only thing stopping us is us. So let's do what we're supposed to do and finish these drives."

Denver's offensive blueprint for beating the Colts—attack Indy's dubious run defense—seemed to be sound, but Manning (32 of 39, 345 yards, three TDs) took over in the second half. Manning connected with Wayne for two touchdowns in the third quarter to take the lead, and then, after Mike Bell's score put the Broncos up 28-23 with 6:54 left, the Colts quarterback went to

Wayne four times on the next possession. The last completion came with 3:35 to go on third-and-two from the Denver 19. Wayne zipped past cornerback Darrent Williams down the sideline, catching a perfect pass from Manning in stride. Wayne then snagged the two-point conversion to put Indy up 31-28.

The Broncos tied the game on a 49-yard field goal with 1:49 left—too much time. It took Manning seven plays, including consecutive completions to Wayne, to set up kicker Adam Vinatieri. Had there been a thin vertical glass rod directly between the goalposts, Vinatieri's kick would have shattered it. And just like that, with its first impressive victory of the season, Indy became the first team in 75 years to begin consecutive seasons 7-0.

—Michael Silver

Reprinted from SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, November 6, 2006

GAME 8

NOVEMBER

5

AT FOXBOROUGH, MASS.

COLTS
PATRIOTS

27
20

PERFECT AGAIN

With a second straight win over the rival Patriots, the Colts became the first team to start consecutive seasons at 8-0 since the Green Bay Packers did it from 1929 to '31. Below, strong safety Antoine Bethea's first-quarter interception set up the Colts' first touchdown.

Photograph by Damian Strohmeyer





DWIGHT FRIGHT

Though he's often double- and triple-teamed, All-Pro defensive end Dwight Freeney finished the season with 45 tackles. His fourth-quarter sack of Bills quarterback J.P. Losman forced kicker Rian Lindell to try a long go-ahead field goal, which he missed.

Photograph by

Brian Spurlock/US PRESSWIRE

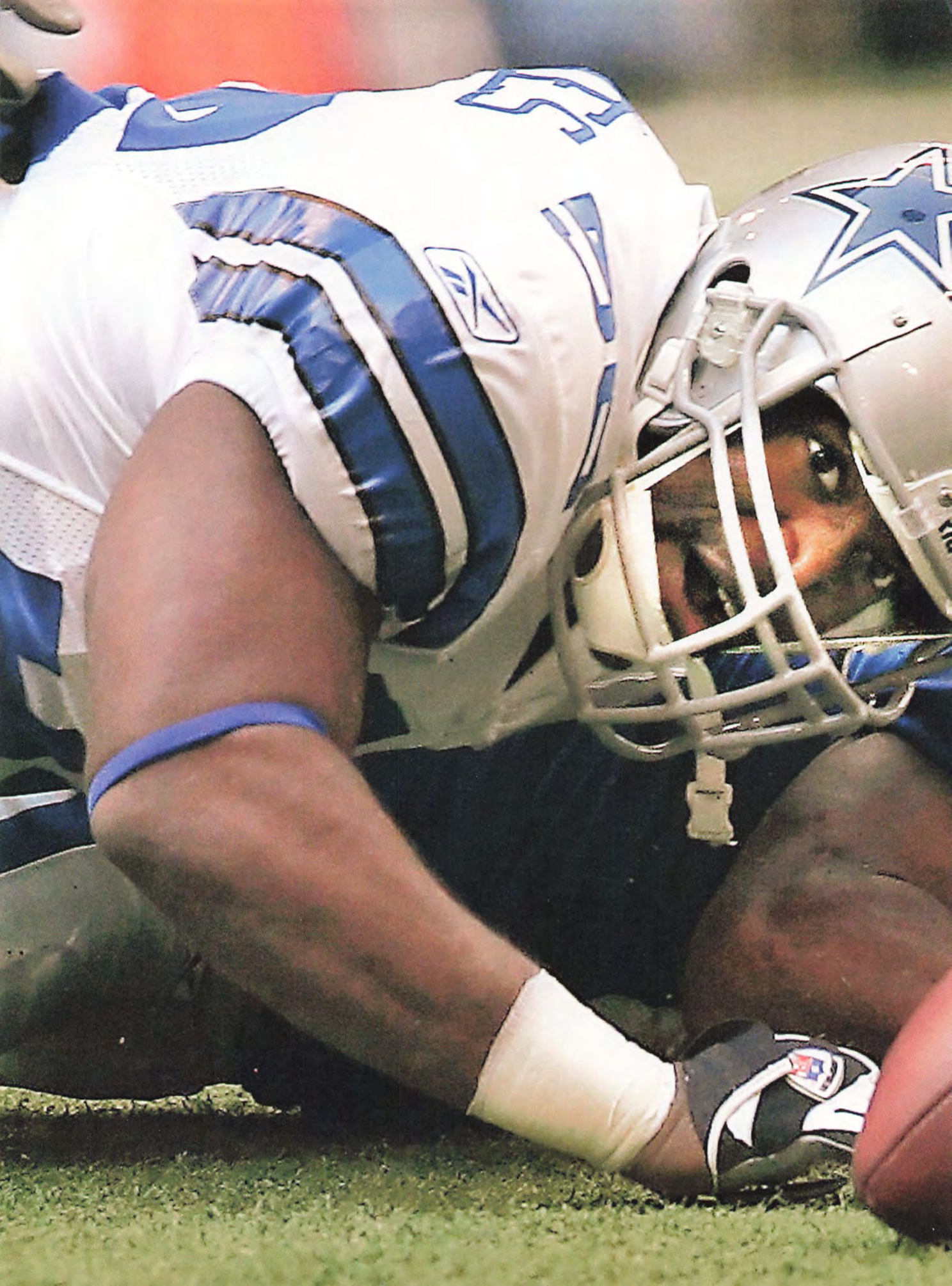
GAME 9
NOVEMBER

12

AT INDIANAPOLIS

BILLS
COLTS

16
17



FOUR EYES ONLY

Colts wide receiver Marvin Harrison and Cowboys linebacker Bradie James eyed a loose ball after Harrison fumbled in the first quarter. Indy turned the ball over four times and lost its first game of the season. "We've been playing with fire—and the fire caught us," said Colts coach Tony Dungy.

Photograph by Mike Stone/Reuters

GAME 10

NOVEMBER

19

AT IRVING, TEXAS

COLTS
COWBOYS

14
21





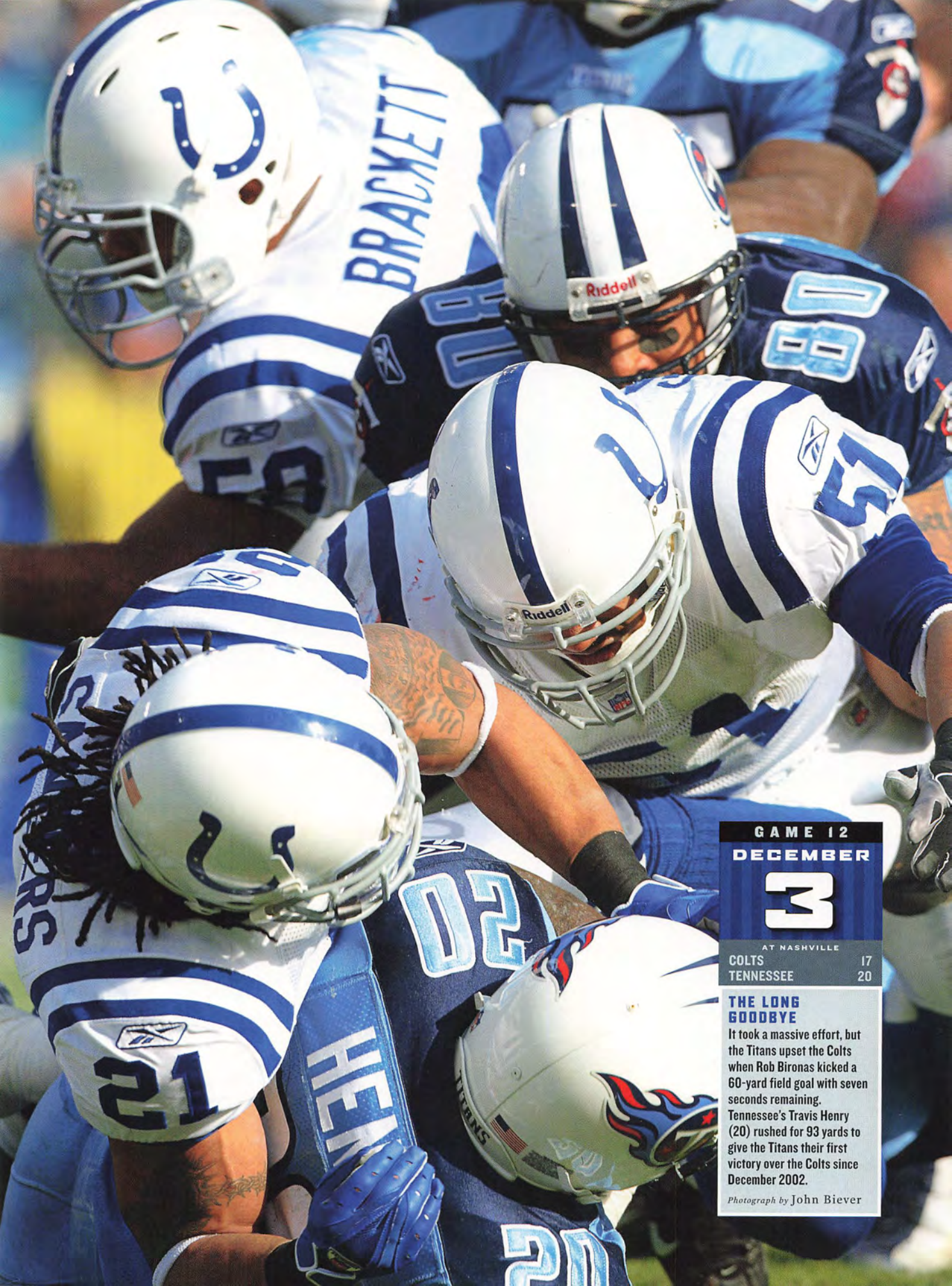
GAME II
NOVEMBER
26

AT INDIANAPOLIS
EAGLES 21
COLTS 45

JOLTIN' JOE

Few Colts rookies have ever had a better day than Joseph Addai's performance against Philadelphia. He rushed for a career-high 171 yards and set a franchise rookie record by scoring four touchdowns in the game. Addai also caught two passes for 37 yards, giving him 208 total yards.

Photograph by
Darron Cummings/AP



GAME 12
DECEMBER

3

AT NASHVILLE

COLTS
TENNESSEE

17
20

THE LONG GOODBYE

It took a massive effort, but the Titans upset the Colts when Rob Bironas kicked a 60-yard field goal with seven seconds remaining. Tennessee's Travis Henry (20) rushed for 93 yards to give the Titans their first victory over the Colts since December 2002.

Photograph by John Biever



GAME 13

DECEMBER

10

AT JACKSONVILLE

COLTS

JAGUARS

17

44

MOWED OVER

Thanks to running backs Maurice Jones-Drew (32) and Fred Taylor, it was a long and ugly day. Jacksonville finished with 375 yards rushing—tied for the second-most in an NFL game since the 1970 merger and the most since Cincinnati gained 407 against Denver in 2000.

Photograph by Scott Clarke/
WireImage.com



GAME 14
DECEMBER
18

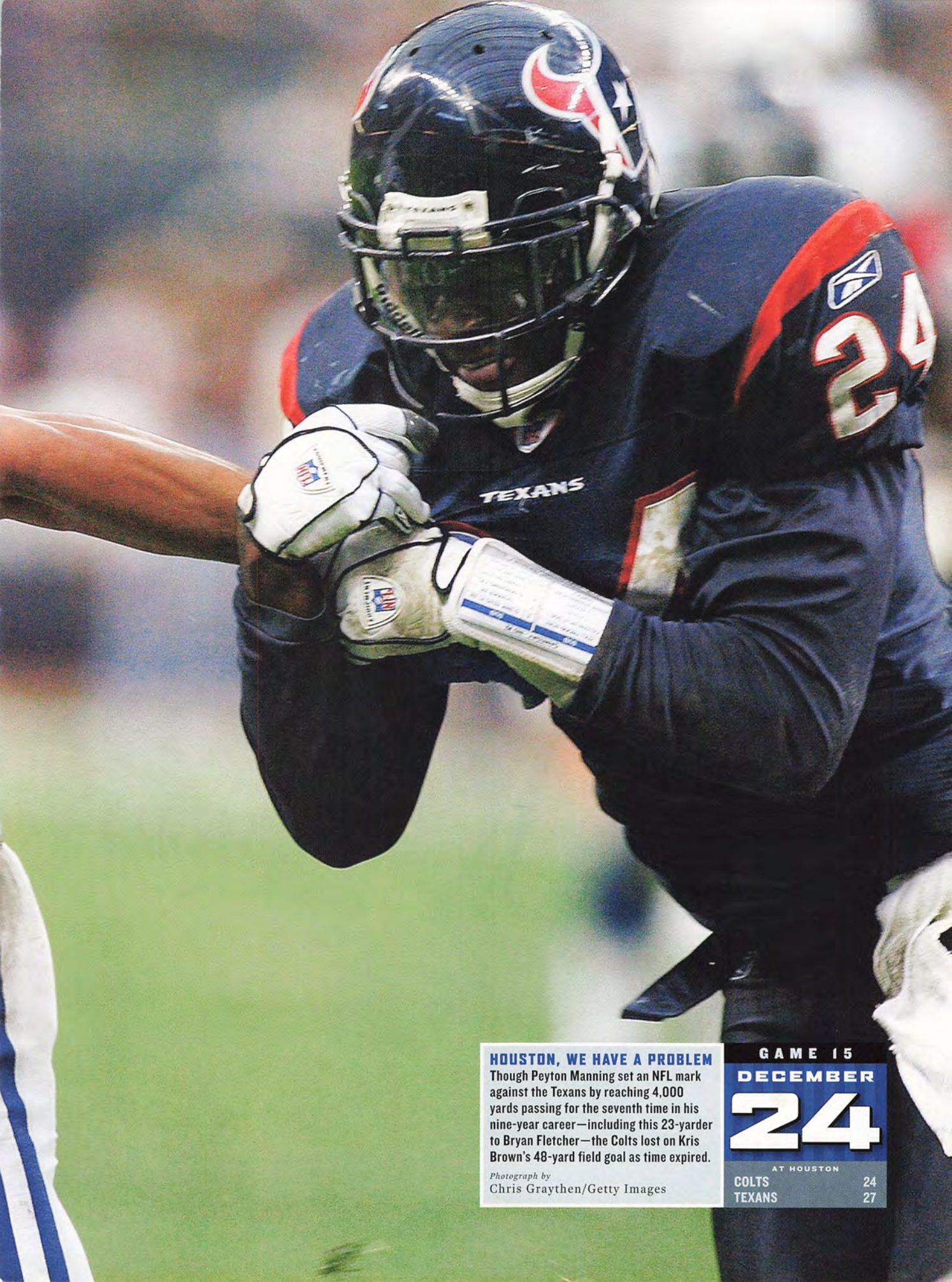
AT INDIANAPOLIS
BENGALS 16
COLTS 34

ANOTHER STRIPE

Peyton Manning can't lose—at least against the Bengals. The Colts' quarterback improved to 5-0 against Cincinnati after completing 29 of 36 for 282 yards and pulling off his 15th career four-touchdown game.

Photograph by
Al Messerschmidt/
WireImage.com





HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Though Peyton Manning set an NFL mark against the Texans by reaching 4,000 yards passing for the seventh time in his nine-year career—including this 23-yarder to Bryan Fletcher—the Colts lost on Kris Brown's 48-yard field goal as time expired.

Photograph by
Chris Graythen/Getty Images

GAME 15

DECEMBER

24

AT HOUSTON

COLTS
TEXANS

24
27

GAME 16
DECEMBER
31

AT INDIANAPOLIS
DOLPHINS 22
COLTS 27

MIAMI NICE

Joseph Addai rushed for 64 yards while the D held the Dolphins to one touchdown; Indy earned the No. 3 seed and a home playoff game. It was the franchise's first perfect home season since '58. Said Peyton Manning, "The idea is to be playing your best football in the month of January."

Photograph by Michael Hickey/
WireImage.com







FOR INDY, HE'S NO ORDINARY JOE

BEHIND THE HARD RUNNING OF ROOKIE RUSHER JOSEPH ADDAI, THE COLTS ROLLED OVER LARRY JOHNSON AND THE CHIEFS ||||| by Jeffri Chadiha

JOSEPH ADDAI exited the RCA Dome in Indianapolis on Jan. 6 as unassumingly as he'd entered. Despite rushing for 122 yards and a touchdown on a season-high 25 carries in a 23-8 AFC wild-card playoff victory over Kansas City, the Colts' rookie back kept the hood of his oversized black sweatshirt pulled over his head as he trudged through a throng of fans. Only the purple-and-gold LSU backpack slung over his shoulder hinted he might be worth pursuing for an autograph.

The pregame talk had centered on what damage Pro Bowl back Larry Johnson would inflict on the Colts' weak rushing defense, leaving Addai happily overlooked. But while he stayed true to his low-key nature afterward—"I just wanted to start fast and be as productive as I could," Addai said—his impact on the Colts has been impossible to ignore. With Peyton Manning uncharacteristically sloppy against the Chiefs (he threw three interceptions in the game), Indianapolis was forced to settle for three Adam Vinatieri field goals in the first half. But Kansas City's offense failed to reward its stingy defense; the Chiefs did not produce a first down in the first 40 minutes, and they trailed 9-0 at halftime. The Colts sealed the game on a 12-play, 89-yard touchdown drive midway through the third quarter. Addai carried six times on the drive, including the

final four plays. His six-yard touchdown run put Indy up 16-0. Addai's rushing total was the third highest by a runner in Colts playoff history. "I've been hearing a lot of talk about Vince Young, but your rookie of the year gets dressed right over there," Colts guard

Jake Scott told *The Indianapolis Star* after the game, pointing at Addai's locker.

As the 30th pick in the draft, Addai (226 carries) split duty this season with sixth-year veteran Dominic Rhodes (187), but Addai clearly has the greater upside, with the quickness and the vision to slash through defenses. "Joe is the most complete running back I've seen come into the league in a long time," said Indianapolis coach Tony Dungy.

What has helped Addai is that he has developed into a more patient runner with each week and that Dungy's platoon system has kept him fresh. In fact, that may be the scariest thing about Addai: As Kansas City learned in the game, he's just now hitting his stride. "We didn't want to give him 320 carries and then get to this point with him feeling like he's already played 20 games," said Dungy. "We wanted him to be ready for this time of year. And so far it looks like it's working." □

GAME BOX AT INDIANAPOLIS

| TEAM | 1ST | 2ND | 3RD | 4TH | TOTAL |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| KC | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| IND | 6 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 23 |

RUSHING KC: Johnson 13-32, Hall 2-14, Bennett 1-1, Green 1 for -3.

IND: Addai 25-122 (1 TD), Rhodes 13-68, Manning 2 for -2.

PASSING KC: Green 14-24 for 107, 2 INTs, 1 TD.

IND: Manning 30-38 for 268, 3 INTs, 1 TD, Smith 1-1 for -16, 0 INTs, 0 TDs.

RECEIVING KC: Johnson 5-29, Wilson 2-29, Gonzalez 4-25 (1 TD), Hall 2-12, Bennett 1-12.

IND: Clark 9-103, Harrison 2-48, Wayne 5-36 (1 TD), Addai 7-26, Rhodes 2-24, Moorehead 2-18, Utecht 2-17.

ADDAI'S 1,081 RUSHING YARDS DURING THE REGULAR SEASON WAS TOPS AMONG ROOKIES.

Photograph by Bob Rosato



KICKING ALL THE WAY

MANNING WAS COOL, THE DEFENSE WAS TIGHT, BUT IT WAS THE RIGHT
LEG OF ADAM VINATIERI THAT DOWNED THE RAVENS ||||| by Peter King

WHEN IT comes to handling Peyton Manning, there's theory and there's reality. Two scenes illustrate the difference: Wednesday, Jan. 10, 5:15 p.m., the office of Ravens defensive coordinator Rex Ryan in Owings Mills, Md. "First and foremost," reads the game plan for Baltimore's AFC divisional playoff game against the Indianapolis Colts, "this is a finesse, nonphysical offense." If a game plan can be both respectful and disdainful, this one is; while Ryan acknowledges Manning's ability, he believes his defense will attack the All-Pro quarterback with such speed and ferocity that he won't know what hit him. "If you don't disrupt Peyton's timing and his rhythm, you have no chance," Ryan said. "But as big a challenge as we face in Peyton, he faces a bigger challenge in us."

Saturday, Jan. 13, 7:37 p.m., M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore. In the scrum on the field after a 15-6 Colts victory, Ryan congratulates Manning, then trudges to the locker room. "Damn!" he says, shaking his head after four quarters of tentative pass rushing by his unit, which was befuddled by Manning's offensive puppeteering and held sackless for the first 49 minutes. "He's a stud," Ryan says. "An unbelievable player. He didn't fall for one of our bluffs all day. Tell you what, it's going to be hard to beat him now."

Suddenly formidable again, the Colts (14-4) have

much going for them heading into the AFC Championship Game at home in the RCA Dome against their postseason rivals from New England. Their defense is reborn, with run-stuffing safety Bob Sanders back from a knee injury and playing like an extra linebacker. In

two playoff games this year Indy has allowed only 14 points, 20 first downs and three of 22 third-down conversions. Adam Vinatieri, the best clutch kicker of all time, won Saturday's game with five field goals in five tries. With 2,007 rushing yards in 18 games, the duo of rookie Joseph Addai and veteran Dominic Rhodes has more than made up for the free-agent loss of Edgerrin James, and Addai has proved to be nearly as good a blocker as James in blitz pickup, which this game illustrated.

The can't-win-the-big-one tag still hangs on Manning, though he insists he's not troubled by that. "I'm not into overanalyzing my career," he said after the win over the Ravens. "I'm into the journey, not the destination." He also remains as cunning as ever. All week Ryan warned his league-leading defense about the wiggles and waggles Manning uses in the first 10 seconds after he lines up under center. But Manning used quick counts to keep the Baltimore D off balance, and out-

GAME BOX

AT BALTIMORE

| TEAM | 1ST | 2ND | 3RD | 4TH | TOTAL |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| IND | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 |
| BAL | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 6 |

RUSHING IND: Rhodes 14-56, Addai 16-39, Manning 3-5.
BAL: Lewis 13-53, Anderson 4-18, Mughelli 2-6,
McNair 1-6.

PASSING IND: Manning 15-30 for 170, 2 INTs, 0 TDs.
BAL: McNair 18-29 for 173, 2 INTs, 0 TDs.

RECEIVING IND: Wayne 5-51, Harrison 4-45, Clark 2-41,
Addai 3-22, Utecht 1-11.
BAL: Clayton 6-73, Heap 3-28, Lewis 3-24, Mason 2-16,
Wilcox 1-15, Mughelli 2-11, Anderson 1-6.

VINATIERI'S QUINTET OF FIELD GOALS BOOSTED
HIS NFL CAREER PLAYOFF RECORD TOTAL TO 34.

Photographs by John Iacono



side linebacker Adalius Thomas wound up waffling in his decision whether to bring an all-out rush or drop into coverage on the tight end.

The quick-count notion came from an unusual source: the quarterback Manning will face in the RCA Dome on Jan. 21, the one with whom he's had

clock run down before the hike. Manning's first thought was that the Ravens use complex defensive disguises much like the Jets'. "So I came in and told my quarterbacks coach [Jim Caldwell], 'Let's look at the film to see how Brady did that,'" Manning says. "I knew that against the Ravens if you

RAHEEM BROCK (79) AND THE REST OF THE COLTS' D HELD JAMAL LEWIS (31) TO A MERE 53 YARDS.

"He's a stud," said Ryan of Manning, "an unbelievable player. He didn't fall for one of our bluffs. It's going to be hard to beat him now."

several epic showdowns in recent years. "I got some ideas from the Patriots," says Manning, referring to Tom Brady's masterly performance in New England's 37-16 opening-round playoff win. When the New York Jets tried to substitute, Brady quick-snapped them into confusion and penalties; when they hurried to the line, Brady let the play

don't throw changeups, you can't win."

It's no surprise that Manning would learn something from Brady, and vice versa. They exchange e-mails and in the off-season play golf and socialize together. Before this season they worked to persuade the NFL to change the way game balls are prepared. "We're both kind of football junkies," Manning said

during training camp. "When we do [get together], we're usually discussing football, trying to improve our games."

Brady and Manning have faced off eight times. Brady is 6-2 in those meetings, including two playoff wins. But Manning has won the last two meetings, at Foxborough, Mass., in November '05 and '06. Two months ago Brady had a nightmarish four-interception game in Indy's 27-20 win. After downing the Chargers in the other AFC divisional game, Brady sounded like a man eager to even the score. "Can't wait for next week already," the Patriots quarterback said. "I just knew we'd be seeing the Colts again."

Manning made a couple of impatient plays in his 15-of-30, 170-yard, no-touchdown, two-interception, one-sack day.

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AFC DIVISIONAL ROUND



But at least the picks came on third-and-17 and third-and-10, and they traveled 49 and 26 yards downfield, respectively. Informed that he had a quarterback rating of 39.6, Manning astutely observed, "You gotta throw that out the window in a game like this."

Two key passes illustrate Manning's value, stats be damned. Early in the third quarter, with Indy nursing a 9-3 lead, he went no-huddle to keep the Ravens from subbing. On a first down from the Colts' 40, he sent tight end Dallas Clark

CLARK'S 14-YARD RECEPTION OF A PINPOINT MANNING PASS SET UP VINATIERI'S FIFTH FIELD GOAL.

up the right seam, while Thomas blitzed from the same side. Addai picked off the charging Thomas three steps from the quarterback, allowing Manning's pinpoint pass to sail into Clark's arms. Gain of 27. Four plays later Vinatieri's fourth field goal of the day—the record 33rd of his playoff career—made it 12-3. "Great pickup by Addai," Manning said. "You can make throws like that when you get that kind of protection."

Leading 12-6 in the fourth quarter, Indy took over at its 36, and Manning's

job was to bleed the last 7:39 off the clock. He drove to the Baltimore 45 and faced a third-and-five with 3:57 to play. If he converted, the Ravens, with one timeout, would have to battle against the clock. If he failed, Indy would punt and Baltimore would have the ball with three minutes and change, one Steve McNair miracle drive away from the AFC title game. Manning sent Clark on a short out-route designed to isolate him on a linebacker. But cat-quick cornerback Corey Ivy picked him up instead. "I knew exactly what the play was," Ivy said. "I wasn't going to give Peyton any room to make that throw."

"The guy was all over me," Clark said.

Manning's pass came within millimeters of Ivy's outstretched hand as it hit Clark for a 14-yard gain. "It rolled up my arm, and I brought it in," said Clark. Three minutes later a 35-yard Vinatieri field goal sealed the win.

Baltimore fans have never gotten over the Colts' move to Indianapolis 23 years ago, and losing the first Colts-Ravens playoff game after finishing 13-3 was the ultimate bitter pill. Indy, meanwhile, welcomes in a familiar foe. Bill Belichick will certainly have something cooked up for Manning, as he always does. "Whoever they play," said Ivy, "Peyton will be ready. He's the best out there. He knew what we were going to do before we did. How do you prepare for that?" □

ANTOINE BETHEA'S GOAL LINE PICK IN THE SECOND QUARTER SNUFFED OUT A BALTIMORE SCORING THREAT.



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ACTUAL SIZE



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THIS TIME, IT'S MANNING'S MOMENT

THE COLTS OVERCAME THEIR NEW ENGLAND NEMESIS AND AT LAST LIVED UP TO THEIR PROMISE OF A SUPER BOWL ||||| by Michael Silver

IN THE bowels of what felt like a haunted house, at a defining moment for a city, a team and a franchise quarterback, the Indianapolis Colts looked to one man for salvation. As the players sat glumly in their RCA Dome locker room at halftime of the AFC Championship Game, reeling from a first half in which they'd fallen behind 21-6 to the New England Patriots, coach Tony Dungy strode among them, delivering a message that even the team's biggest star had trouble swallowing. "I'm telling you, this is our game," Dungy proclaimed, fixing his eyes on quarterback Peyton Manning, whose playoff struggles mirrored Dungy's own. "It's our time."

Dungy had uttered the same words the previous night as the team gathered at its downtown Indianapolis hotel, but now his optimism seemed unfounded. Manning, who up to now might as well have had CAN'T WIN THE BIG ONE tattooed on his forehead, was still obsessing over the 39-yard interception for a touchdown he'd served up to cornerback Asante Samuel, which had put the Patriots up 21-3 less than six minutes into the second quarter. *It's our time?* Had these words come from anyone other than Dungy, Manning would have tuned him out. "But Tony is one calm customer, no matter what the circumstance," the Pro Bowl quarterback said later, "and

he has a way of making you believe. We're stressed out, and he's parading back and forth telling us we're going to win. That rubs off on the younger players, even the older players. It made a difference."

To credit a coach's demeanor for inspiring the biggest

comeback ever in a conference championship game and a historic trip to Super Bowl XLI would be overly simplistic, for Indy's thrilling, 38-34 victory required every bit of resourcefulness that this long-tormented team could muster. But it's true that everything the 51-year-old Dungy did at halftime, from his shrewd strategic adjustments to the perspective he provided, steeled a group of men who revere him at a time when abject panic was a couple of bad plays away. In return, with 30 tran-

scendent minutes of football, the Colts claimed a triumph steeped in significance: They vanquished their archnemesis, a team that had twice humbled them in the postseason and won three of the last five Super Bowls; Manning vaulted closer to the realm of the Pats' Tom Brady, his chief rival for supremacy at the sport's most glamorous position; and the franchise, which moved from Baltimore to title-starved Indy in 1984, earned its first Super Bowl berth in 36 years.

GAME BOX

AT INDIANAPOLIS

| TEAM | 1ST | 2ND | 3RD | 4TH | TOTAL |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| NE | 7 | 14 | 7 | 6 | 34 |
| IND | 3 | 3 | 15 | 17 | 38 |

RUSHING NE: Dillon 7-48 (1 TD), Faulk 4-27, Maroney 8-13, Evans 1-4, Brady 4-1.

IND: Rhodes 14-69, Addai 14-56 (1 TD), Manning 2-0 (1 TD).

PASSING NE: Brady 21-34 for 232, 1 INT, 1 TD.

IND: Manning 27-47 for 349, 1 INT, 1 TD.

RECEIVING NE: Watson 5-48, Caldwell 4-46, Gaffney 3-37 (1 TD), Evans 4-33, Brown 2-32, Graham 1-25, Maroney 1-6, Faulk 1-5.

IND: Clark 6-137, Wayne 5-68, Harrison 4-41, Rhodes 4-38, Fletcher 1-32, Moorehead 3-23, Utecht 1-5, Klocke 1-1 (1 TD).

IN A COMEBACK OF HISTORIC PROPORTIONS, MANNING THREW FOR 349 YARDS AND ONE TD.

Photograph by Al Tielemans



DEFENSIVE TACKLE DARRELL REID AND THE COLTS' D HELD THE PATS TO UNDER 100 YARDS RUSHING.

American coach is in the Super Bowl. We want to do that for him so bad, because he's like a father figure."

The players also are painfully aware of what the affable, deeply religious Dungy went through last season: In December 2005, Tony and wife Lauren's son James committed suicide at age 18. Tony missed the second-to-last regular-season game but returned after a weeklong absence. In its playoff opener top-seeded Indianapolis looked understandably distracted and suffered a 21-18 upset to the eventual champion Pittsburgh Steelers.

A little more than a year later Indy seemed to be replaying the Pittsburgh game, as the fourth-seeded Patriots caught the Colts napping in Naptown.

BILL FRANKS (REID); AL TILLEMANS

Oh, and this: The Ultimate Game just got a double dose of overdue diversity. When the Colts meet the Chicago Bears at Dolphin Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla., on Feb. 4, Dungy and Lovie Smith, his close friend and former assistant, will make history as the first African-American head coaches to stand on a Super Bowl sideline. Dungy, a man who appreciates the milestone's importance, had smiled earlier in the day as he

despite being one of the most successful coaches of the postmerger era (a 114-62 regular-season record) had lost eight of 13 playoff games before Indy entered this postseason as a No. 3 seed. After reviving the once-pathetic Tampa Bay Buccaneers with an impressive six-season run as their coach, Dungy was fired before the 2002 season, then saw his replacement, Jon Gruden, lead the Bucs to a Super Bowl victory. "[Dungy]

Everything Dungy did at halftime steeled a group of men who revere him at a time when abject panic was a couple of bad plays away.

watched the Bears take an 18-point lead over the New Orleans Saints in the NFC title game. Heading to the field for pregame warmups shortly afterward, he thought, *Lovie's done it; now I've got to do my part*. Dungy figured an 18-point deficit was insurmountable—a notion, oddly enough, that his Colts would dispel a few hours later.

In a league of ultracompetitive jockeying and ulterior motives, few figures are as widely admired as Dungy, who

built that team, and watching it win after he was gone had to hurt," Colts wideout Reggie Wayne had said the Thursday night before the AFC title game while he and 10 Indy defenders had dined at an Indianapolis steak house. "We want to make up for that, and we know that this can be the first time an African-

ADDAI BURST INTO THE END ZONE AND CAPPED THE COLTS' LAST-MINUTE, GAME-WINNING DRIVE.



AFC CHAMPIONSHIP

New England took a 7-0 first-quarter lead when Patriots guard Logan Mankins dived on the ball in the end zone after Brady and Laurence Maroney had mishandled an exchange from the Colts' four-yard line. (The football gods would return the favor early in the fourth quarter on a strangely similar play that bounced Indy's way, with center Jeff Saturday getting the star turn.) A seven-yard run by Corey Dillon put New England up 14-3, and two plays later Samuel jumped a sideline pass from Manning to wideout Marvin Harrison that hit the MUTE button on 57,433 fans. The Colts drove to the New England eight late in the half but settled for ex-Pats kicker Adam Vinatieri's second field goal.

The deficit called for adjustments, and Dungy and his assistants delivered. New England coach Bill Belichick, as is

his custom, had devised a new wrinkle to throw at Manning, benching pass-rushing linebacker Tully Banta-Cain, shifting veteran inside backer Mike Vrabel to Banta-Cain's outside spot and giving third-year linebacker Eric Alexander his first career start. The move put Alexander, who is speedier than Vrabel, on tight end Dallas Clark and allowed the Patriots to disguise some of their zone coverages with man-to-man looks—a ploy that helped Samuel bait Manning into throwing the interception.

But Dungy proved that his mind is as robust as his heart. "Belichick gets all the credit for training smart football players," says San Francisco 49ers backup QB Trent Dilfer, who played for Dungy in Tampa, "but Tony teaches football IQ as well as anybody in the NFL." Dungy's first move at halftime was to tweak Indy's predictable deploy-

ment of its Pro Bowl wideouts, which is Harrison on the right and Wayne on the left. Instead, the Colts sent Wayne into the slot, and third wideout Aaron Moorehead or Clark took his place on the outside. This, said receivers coach Clyde Christensen, forced the Patriots out of their base 3-4 and into a nickel package that used a Cover Two scheme. With the corners playing press coverage, Clark and Wayne could exploit openings in the middle of the field.

Dungy also flashed back to one of his team's crushing losses to New England: a 38-34 home defeat in '03, when Indy trailed 31-10 before mounting a comeback that fell a yard short. "This gap is easier to close," Dungy told his players at the half. "We get the ball first, and if we score a touchdown on our first drive, we're only one score down."

Manning and the offense came out





firing; he ended a 14-play, 76-yard drive with a one-yard sneak to make it 21-13. The Pats went three and out, and Manning mobilized once again, beginning with a 25-yard pass over the middle to Clark. The drive ended, improbably, on Manning's one-yard toss to backup defensive lineman and goal line fullback Dan Klecko. When Harrison made a terrific catch of a gorgeous Manning fade to the right corner for a two-point conversion to tie the game with four minutes left in the third quarter, it was time for the world's two best quarterbacks to step on the gas.

These were the stakes: Drive 80 yards and take a trip to Electric Bradyland; fall short and face at least another year's worth of chokes-under-pressure barbs.

PROUD PAPA ARCHIE MANNING
EMBRACED HIS SECOND SON
BEHIND THE END ZONE.

Gentlemen, start your spirals. Brady's willowy six-yard toss to wideout Jabar Gaffney in the back of the end zone put New England up 28-21. Manning answered by driving Indy to the Patriots' two, whereupon Saturday recovered running back Dominic Rhodes's fumble to tie the game. The teams traded field goals before rookie Stephen Gostkowski's 43-yarder gave New England a 34-31 lead with 3:49 left. Each defense forced punts without allowing a first down, and when Manning trotted onto the field with 2:17 to go and the ball at his own 20, these were the stakes: Drive 80 yards and take a trip to Electric Bradyland; fall short and face at

AMID A SHOWER OF CONFETTI,
THE CELEBRATION WAS ON FOR
JACKSON AND THE COLTS.

least another year's worth of chokes-under-pressure barbs.

Manning was on his game even before kickoff, as his mother, Olivia, attested outside the Colts' locker room afterward. Noting that she and her husband, former Saints quarterback Archie, were celebrating their 36th wedding anniversary, Olivia gestured toward Peyton's older brother, Cooper, and his younger brother, New York Giants quarterback Eli, standing nearby. "Only one of my boys remembered," Olivia said, pulling out her cellphone to reveal a text message sent at

est score any Colts fan has seen since Johnny Unitas hung up his high-tops.

Still, this epic wasn't finished until Brady, with 24 seconds to go and the ball at the Indy 45, zipped a pass over the middle toward tight end Benjamin Watson. Colts cornerback Marlin Jackson saw it like a neon light on South Beach. He raced in to make the interception that sent a choked-up coach and his jacked-up players to Miami.

Long after the confetti-laced celebration on the field, Dungy retreated to the dressing area and let his emotions flow. He talked of the inspiration



2:58 p.m. HAPPY ANNIVERSARY. I LOVE Y'ALL—PEYTON.

On the most glorious drive a Manning quarterback has ever led, Archie was hiding in the tunnel behind the end zone, nervously sneaking peeks at the field. Peyton sandwiched completions to Wayne around a 32-yard deep out to third-string tight end Bryan Fletcher. Suddenly it was first down at New England's 11, and two runs by rookie Joseph Addai set up a third-and-two at the three. The Patriots typically blitz in such situations, but Dungy reasoned that they'd be hesitant because they'd been burned while doing so—on a Manning fade to Harrison for a TD—during Indianapolis's 27-20 win in Foxborough, Mass., in November. He was right. The Patriots sat back. Addai took a handoff and blasted up the middle for the sweet-

he'd derived from James's memory and from the other parents of suicide victims whom he has befriended in the wake of his son's death. And he recalled the goodbye hug he had gotten from Lauren as he prepared to leave for the Dome that afternoon.

"I want a blowout," she'd said, to which her husband replied, "It's probably not gonna be that way. It's gonna be a nail-biter." Then she clutched him tight and whispered, "No matter what happens, no matter what you do, I support you."

On this landmark day, Lauren Dungy had more company than she could have known—most notably from a locker room full of players whose leader refused to let them wilt. And really, why should they have? It was their time. □

PEYTON'

ON A RAINY NIGHT IN MIAMI, PEYTON
LEADING HIS COLTS TO A WIN IN THE



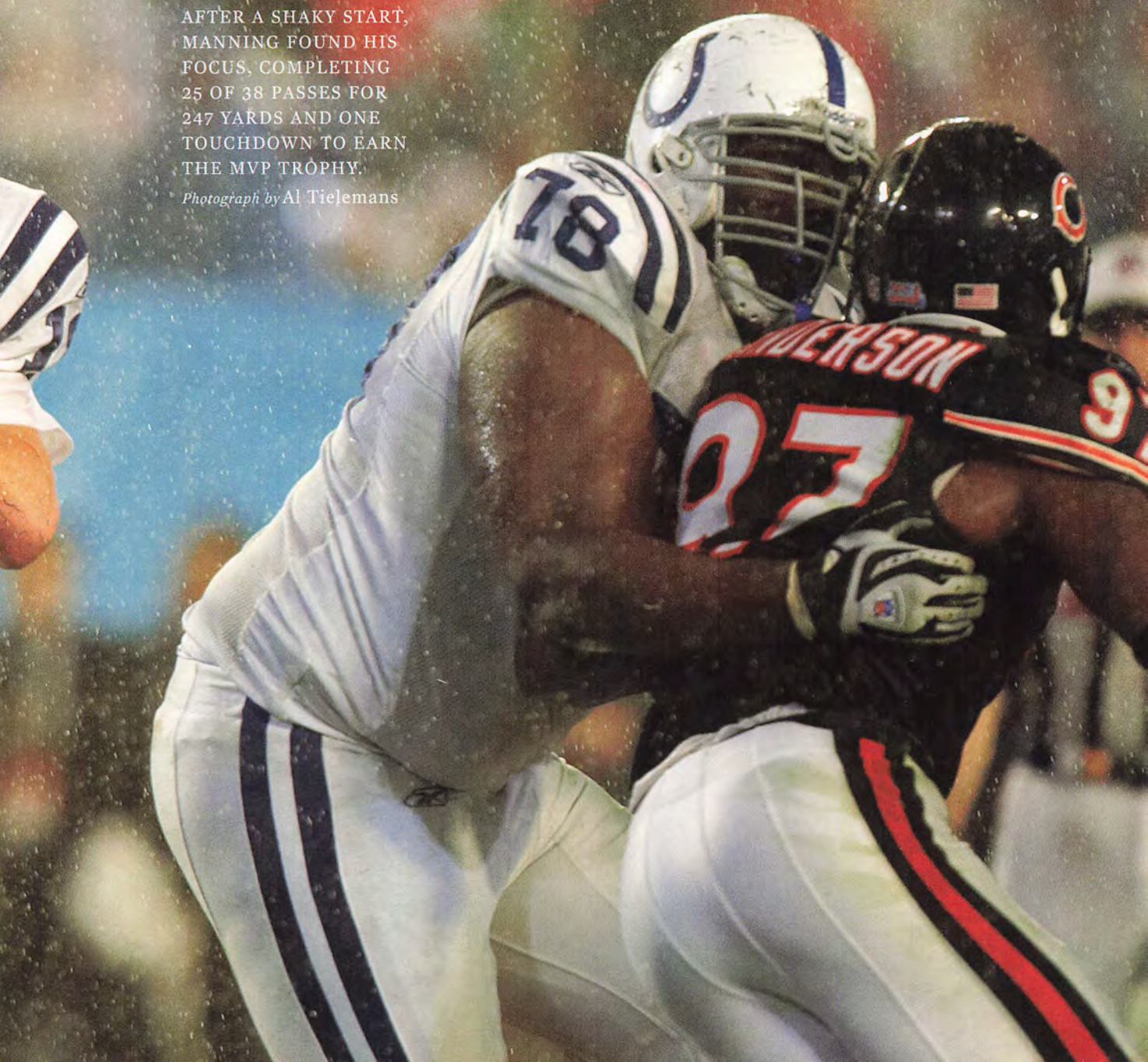
SUPER BOWL XLI

S PLACE

MANNING REACHED THE PROMISED LAND—
BIGGEST ONE OF ALL |||| by Michael Silver

AFTER A SHAKY START,
MANNING FOUND HIS
FOCUS, COMPLETING
25 OF 38 PASSES FOR
247 YARDS AND ONE
TOUCHDOWN TO EARN
THE MVP TROPHY.

Photograph by Al Tielemans



IN PURSUIT of a victory that would recast his reputation, his heart racing with anticipation, Peyton Manning called the boldest and most controversial audible of his career. Twelve days before

he would face the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XLI, he stood up in a meeting room at the Indianapolis Colts' training facility and delivered an unpopular decree to his teammates who had gathered to talk logistics before their weeklong trip to South Florida. Colts president Bill Polian, one of the NFL's most autocratic executives, had announced that there would be restrictions on visitors to the team's hotel in Fort Lauderdale but that players would be free to spend time with family members and other guests in the confines of their own rooms. This unnerved Manning, who essentially threw out Polian's play for one more to his liking. "I don't think we should let *anyone* up in the rooms," Manning told the stunned group of players and coaches. "This is a business trip, and I don't want any distractions. I don't want any crying kids

THE DYNAMIC ONE-TWO OF RHODES (RIGHT) AND ADDAI (BELOW) RACKED UP 190 YARDS AND RATTLED THE BEARS ALL NIGHT.

next to me while I'm trying to study."

That Manning would get his way was a foregone conclusion—Indy has been Peyton's Place since his arrival as the No. 1 pick in the 1998 draft—but grumblings of dissent still filled the room. "We were heated," recalls veteran cornerback Nick Harper. "People were saying, We're grown-ass men. We've got wives and kids, and we'll make those decisions for ourselves. But, you know, it turned out all right."

Hyperfocused to his heart's desire,

GAME BOX

AT MIAMI

| TEAM | 1ST | 2ND | 3RD | 4TH | TOTAL |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| IND | 6 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 29 |
| CHI | 14 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 17 |

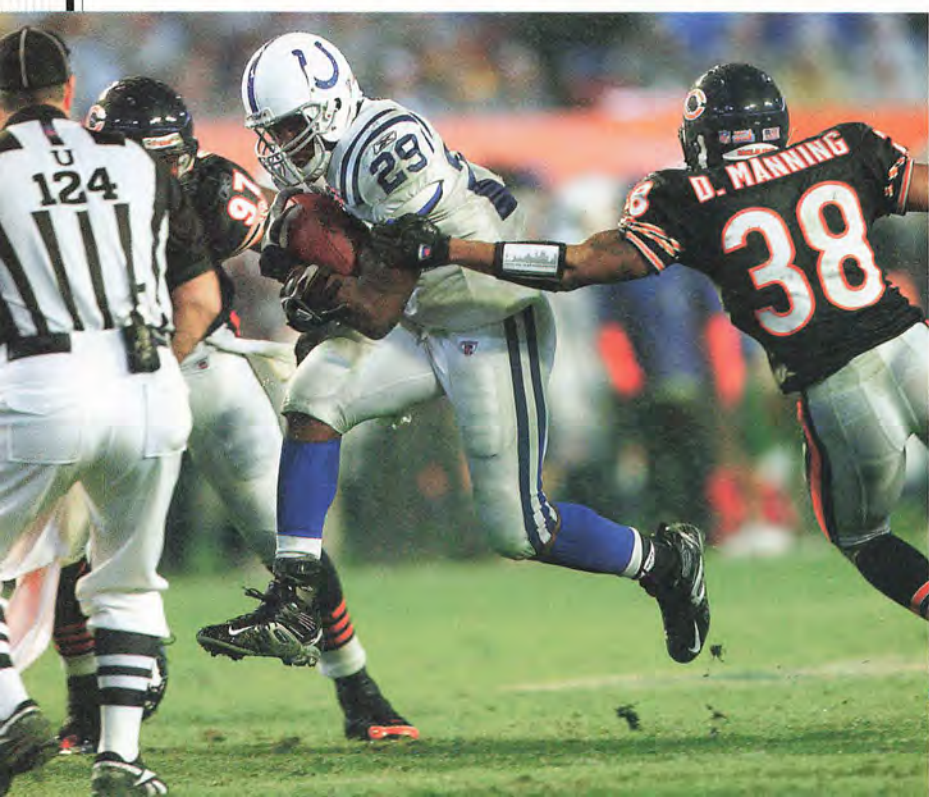
RUSHING IND: Rhodes 21-113 (1 TD), Addai 19-77, Clark 1-1, Manning 1-0.

CHI: Jones 15-112, Grossman 2-0, Benson 2 for -1.

PASSING IND: Manning 25-38 for 247, 1 INT, 1 TD.

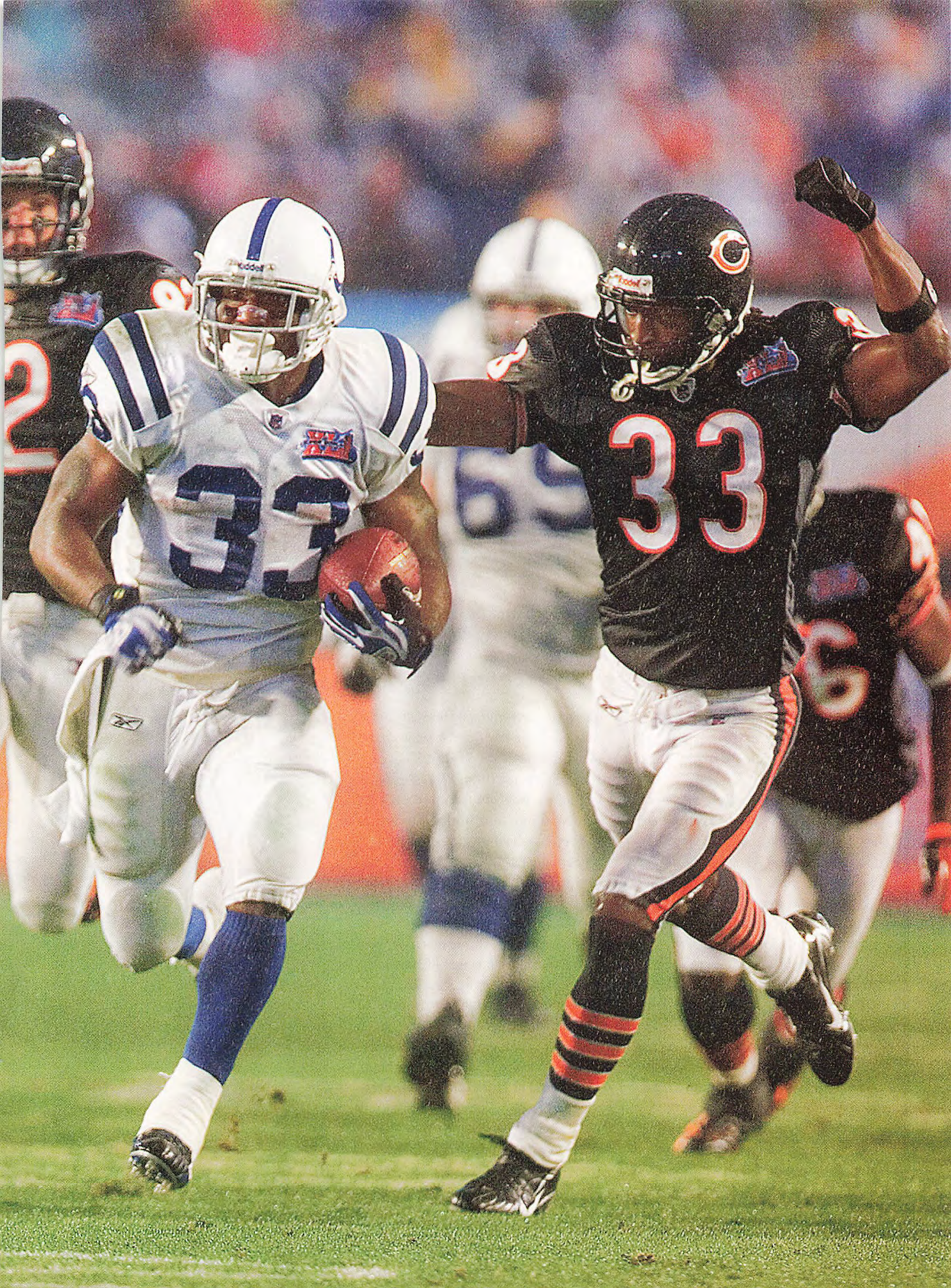
CHI: Grossman 20-28 for 165, 2 INTs, 1 TD.

RECEIVING IND: Addai 10-66, Harrison 5-59, Clark 4-36, Wayne 2-61 (1 TD), Fletcher 2-9, Rhodes 1-8, Utecht 1-8. CHI: Clark 6-64, Berrian 4-38, Jones 4-18, Muhammad 3-35 (1 TD), McKie 2-8, Davis 1-2.



DAMIAN STROHMAYER (RIGHT): AL TIELEMANS





Manning was at his Super Sunday best in leading the Colts to a 29-17 victory before 74,512 fans at Dolphin Stadium. In earning MVP honors and shedding his can't-win-the-big-one tag (as did Indy coach Tony Dungy, who defeated his close friend and former assistant Lovie Smith in a matchup of the first two African-American head coaches in Super Bowl history), Manning overcame a sketchy start and seized control of a sloppy game in a driving rain-storm. Yet the seven-time All-Pro needed plenty of help to claim the Colts' first championship since their move to Indianapolis in 1984, and relying on his teammates to provide it was another sign of his maturation. A year after appearing to criticize his offensive linemen following a painful playoff loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers—"I'm trying to be a good teammate here," he said to reporters while discussing pass-protection problems—Manning now understands, as he said a few hours after the game, "that everybody's got to do his part, and you have to trust them all to do that."

Late that night fans were dancing in the streets of Indy thanks to players such as rookie halfback Joseph Addai (143 rushing and receiving yards), his backup Dominic Rhodes (21 carries, 113 yards) and second-team cornerback Kelvin Hayden, whose 56-yard interception return for a touchdown with 11:59 remaining provided the game's final points. By then Manning had solved Chicago's formidable defense with a barrage of underneath passes and timely run calls while Indy's far less heralded D had repelled quarterback Rex Grossman and limited the Bears to a field goal after the 4:34 mark of the first quarter. "Everyone thinks this is about Peyton's legacy," Colts defensive end Dwight Freeney said afterward, "but listen—this is a 53-man team. Peyton



BLOOPER BOWL? IN ALL, THE GAME FEATURED EIGHT TURNOVERS, FIVE BY THE BEARS, INCLUDING ONE NABBED BY FREENEY (RIGHT).

doesn't do everything by himself, and at the end of the day defense wins championships. That still holds up."

When owner Jimmy Irsay—whose late father, Bob, abruptly uprooted the team and moved it from Baltimore to Indy in '84—held up the Lombardi Trophy at game's end, it was a testament to this team's grit, perseverance and togetherness. "We're so tight-knit," Irsay said between celebratory hugs in the locker room. "Our bonds have been forged through some real-life tragedies, and those things make you stronger."

The suicide of Dungy's 18-year-old son, James, in December 2005 started the Colts on an emotional, character-testing journey. That shocking home playoff loss in January '06 to the eventual Super Bowl champion Steelers was followed by, among other events, the free-agent departure of All-Pro running back Edgerrin James, a popular veteran who signed with the Arizona



Cardinals; the death of Pro Bowl wide-out Reggie Wayne's older brother, Rashad, in an automobile accident in September; and a late-season stretch (following a 9-0 start) in which Indy lost three of four games, including a 44-17 drubbing by the Jacksonville Jaguars in which the maligned run defense gave up an astounding 375 yards. Seeded third in the AFC after a 12-4 regular season, the Colts surprisingly shut down both the Kansas City Chiefs and the Baltimore Ravens on the ground. Manning then rallied Indy from a 21-3 deficit to pull out a dramatic 38-34 win over the Colts' longtime nemesis, the New England Patriots, in the AFC title game.

As the football world anticipated Manning's crowning achievement, the prickly passer refused to play along. While many of the Colts spent part of Super Bowl week enjoying the South

Beach social scene, Manning, after taking 20 players to dinner in Fort Lauderdale following the team's arrival on the Monday before the game, was holed up at the Colts' hotel. In an effort to replicate his routine in Indy, where he watches film in the basement of his house, Manning had the team

Bruce Springsteen's *Glory Days* was one—to an iPod, Manning went decidedly retro. "Ashley bought me one of those Discman things for, like, eight bucks," he said. "Reggie Wayne and [linebacker] Cato June couldn't believe someone still made those anymore. They were taking pictures of it because

"Once we got the lead, we knew," said Harper. "We knew there was no way in hell they were going to beat us in the passing game."

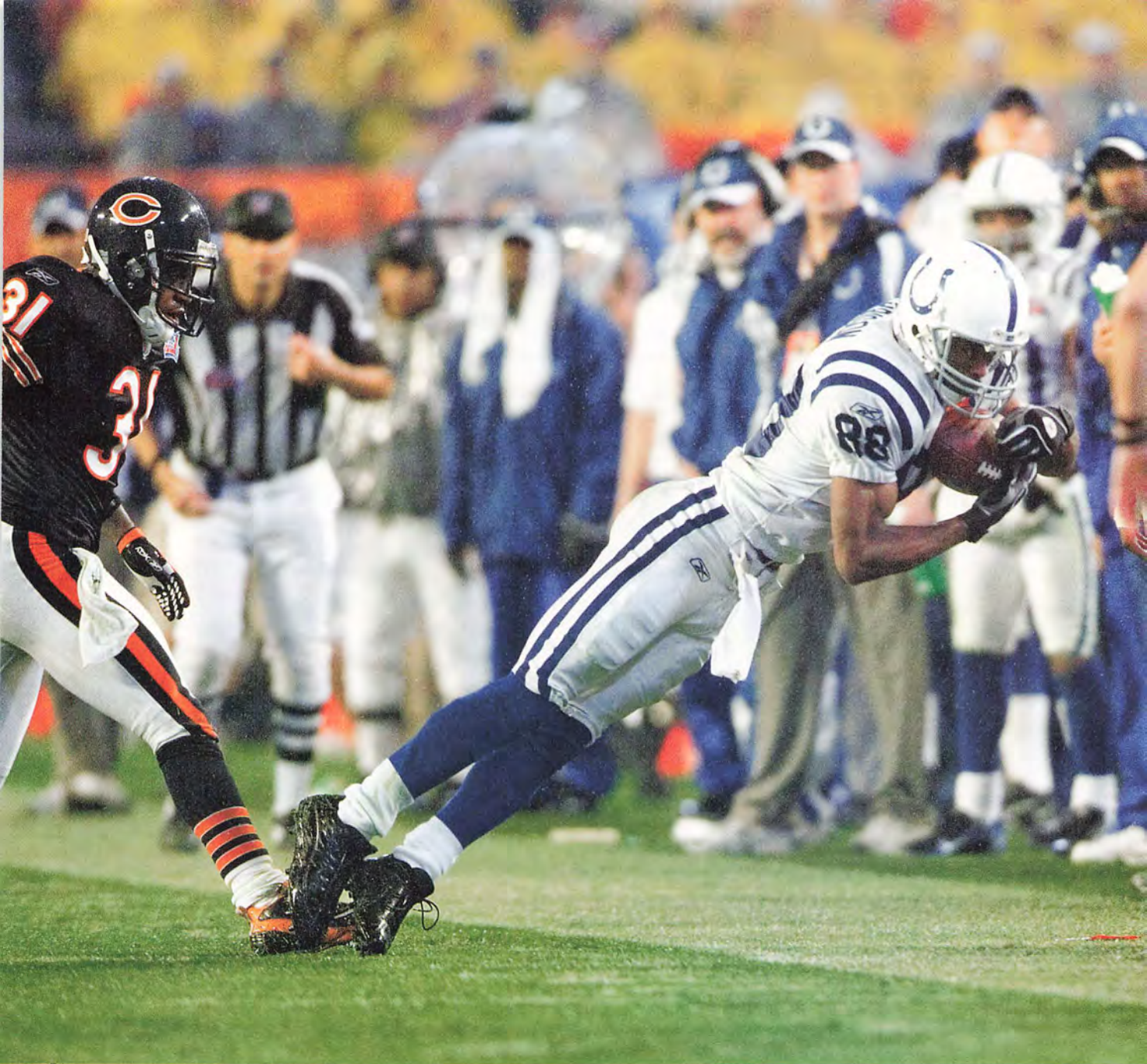
provide a similar setup on the Marriott Harbor Beach resort's third floor. He even listened to the same music on bus rides to and from practice that he had played during car trips throughout the playoffs: a mix CD given to him by his wife, Ashley, for Christmas. But instead of copying the tunes—

they thought it was so funny. But hey, I kept to the routine."

Not every Colts player found humor in Manning's intensity. The no-visitors policy had some teammates complaining about the franchise's indulgent "Peyton Rules." And after Dungy and offensive coordinator Tom Moore asked



DAMIAN STROMEYER (BELOW), SIMON BRUTY



HARRISON'S LEANING TIP-TOE CATCH IN THE THIRD QUARTER WAS RULED COMPLETE AFTER REVIEW.

for Manning's input in planning the Jan. 31 practice session, one player grouched that the team should be renamed the Indianapolis Peytons.

If the Peytons were a tad tight heading into their meeting with the Bears, the start of the game did nothing to alleviate the stress. Chicago rookie Devin Hester, the former University of Miami star who had scored six special teams touchdowns during the regular season,

took the opening kickoff, danced up the middle, burst to his right and struck like a Hurricane. His 92-yard dash was the first-ever score on the opening play of a Super Bowl and put the Colts in an immediate 7-0 hole. Dungy, who in his speech to his players the previous night had warned that they'd have to overcome "a storm" at some point during the game, shook his head and thought, I wish I weren't *that* prophetic.

Indy's first play from scrimmage called for tight end Dallas Clark to run a seam route underneath the safeties, but he broke it inside instead. Man-

ning's throw was deflected by middle linebacker Brian Urlacher, whose typically impressive effort would include 10 tackles. Later in the drive the Colts were called for a pair of false-start penalties, the second of which set up third-and-13 from the Indy 41. Hoping to hit his favorite target, wideout Marvin Harrison, Manning made his lone mistake of the game, hanging a ball that strong safety Chris Harris picked off. Gulp. Said Manning, "We looked like a team that had never played in the Super Bowl."

Manning settled the Colts' nerves



JOHN BIEVER (2); JOHN IACONO (BOTTOM RIGHT)

with 6:58 left in the first quarter. On third-and-10 from the Indy 47 he called 66 D X-Pump, a play Moore installed for the Super Bowl that called for Wayne, lined up to the left side, to run an in-and-go route designed to exploit Chicago's base Cover Two zone scheme. The hope was that Bears free safety Danieal Manning (no relation) would bite on the pump-fake. What Peyton got was even more ideal—Chicago's Manning, who seemed to be playing man coverage while the rest of his teammates followed their zone assignments, jumped tight end Ben Utecht's inside route, leaving



WITH THE COLTS UP 22-17, HAYDEN'S LEAPING PICK AND 56-YARD TD RETURN FINISHED OFF THE BEARS.

Wayne alone in the middle of the field. Facing pressure from defensive tackle Tank Johnson, Manning stayed in the pocket long enough to let Wayne break free, then delivered a rainbow that, from the receiver's perspective, "seemed like it hung in the air forever." Wayne spun around to catch the ball inside the 20 and cruised into the end zone to complete the 53-yard touchdown; Indy trailed 7-6 after punter Hunter Smith botched the hold on the extra point.

Adam Vinatieri kicked short to avoid another runback by Hester (a practice Indy followed for the rest of the game), and the Colts got the ball back when Robert Mathis forced a Gabe Reid fumble and Tyjuan Hagler recovered. But on the next play Manning and Addai failed to connect on a handoff, and Mark Anderson, the Bears' rookie defensive end, pounced on the ball. Remarkably, it was the first of two back-to-back fumble sequences in the first half. (The Blooper Bowl would include eight turnovers, five by Chicago.) Dur-



ing the play Manning banged the already sprained thumb on his passing hand that had required a pregame painkilling injection, but the football gods were taking care of him. "With a wet ball," he explained later, "you've got to hold it light to make it go where you want. So the bad thumb kind of helped me because I couldn't grip it real hard."

Before Manning (25 of 38, 247 yards, one touchdown) took hold of the game, the Bears mustered one show of offensive force. A 52-yard run by halfback Thomas Jones set up Grossman's four-



SOPPING WITH RAIN AND GATORADE, DUNGY SOAKED UP THE MOMENT AS HIS NEW CHAMPS BORE HIM OFF.

full season as a starter. Instead, he underthrew a sideline pass to Muhammad that Hayden caught and returned to break the game open. Less than two minutes after that mistake, Grossman lobbed a deep ball for wideout Bernard Berrian that was intercepted by free safety Bob Sanders, and the only remaining suspense was whether Dungy would receive a Gatorade bath. (He did, though in the steady rain it's a wonder the unflappable coach even noticed.)

The game had been over for an hour and a half before Manning finally showered. He didn't leave the locker room until after midnight, when the rest of his teammates had already boarded buses that would take them to the victory party at their hotel. At 30, after so many years spent in the spotlight—that's life when you're the son of football icon Archie Manning—he had finally earned the bling that would validate his status as one of the game's enduring elite, and he wanted to get the party started. *Glory days, they'll pass you by.* . . .

The rain drenched Manning's dark suit as he left the stadium and walked briskly toward the last of the buses. A few steps behind, his older brother, Cooper, looked back and, worried that

yard touchdown pass to wideout Muhsin Muhammad, giving Chicago a 14-6 lead with 4:34 left in the first quarter. At that point, to paraphrase halftime performer Prince, many in the decidedly pro-Bears crowd were ready to party like it was 1986. But Indy pulled ahead before halftime on the first of three Vinatieri field goals and Rhodes's one-yard scoring run. With a 16-14 lead, the Colts' increasingly energized defenders were confident the game was theirs.

"Once we got the lead, we *knew*," said Harper, who reaggravated a left high-ankle sprain late in the second quarter and did not return. "We wanted to put

"We're so tight-knit," Irsay said. "Our bonds have been forged through some real-life tragedies, and those things make you stronger."

the ball in Grossman's hands. Now I can say what I'd really felt all week: We'd seen the film, and we knew there was no way in hell they were going to beat us in the passing game."

When Grossman got the ball at his own 20 trailing 22-17 and with 13:38 left in the game, he had a chance to answer Harper and all the other critics who'd dogged him for much of his first

Archie might be left behind amid the confusion, yelled, "Dad! Come on! We've got to go!" Archie picked up the pace, but it proved unnecessary. There, waiting at the bus's front door, was Peyton, smiling like a newly crowned champion. As his teammates could have attested, there was no way in hell that bus was leaving until the quarterback was good and ready. □

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THE TEAM PLAYER



HOW DID PEYTON MANNING FINALLY
WIN HIS FIRST SUPER BOWL? BY
BEING COOL UNDER PRESSURE, USING
THE RUNNING GAME AND, ABOVE ALL,
BY TRUSTING IN HIS TEAMMATES

b y P e t e r K i n g

A FINESSE PLAYER NO MORE, MANNING WALKS ONTO THE FIELD PREPARED FOR BATTLE.

Photograph by Allen Kee/WireImage.com



THE GREAT irony about Peyton Manning finally winning the Big One is that he didn't have to be the Peyton Manning everyone thinks he is to do it. ¶ You know *that* Peyton Manning: The Daryle Lamonica Manning, the mad bomber who never met a deep post he didn't like.

The A-Rod Manning, who had the greatest stats of his era but no championship rings. The prodigious passer Manning, who's thrown for more than 3,700 yards in every season of his nine-year career, the only quarterback to do so. The artful orchestrator Manning, who was born to call his own plays—and then re-call them with four seconds left on the play clock, just to further confuse an already befuddled defense.

But in the two most significant turns on Manning's road to his first championship, he changed the public's perception of him, and he did it by letting his teammates do the job. In fourth-quarter drives against the Ravens and the Patriots, he handed the ball off. Not once or twice but 15 times out of 16 plays. How beautiful is that? Imagine the Yankees in Game 7 of the World Series and Alex Rodriguez laying down a sacrifice bunt to win it.

Manning threw for seven jillion yards to get seven jillion commercials and to get to seven Pro Bowls, but putting it in the guts of Dominic Rhodes and Joseph Addai got him his big ring. There's something so great about that, something so football about that.

There is no epiphany here, no moment that made Manning say, "I don't care how we win, I just want to win." He's not the opposite player from the one who threw an NFL-record 49 touchdown passes in 2004, including 11 of four yards or fewer—goal line plays safer to run on than pass on. In fact, Manning claims he's no different at all. The calls he made in the critical moments of the playoffs, however, say otherwise. Forget for a moment how the Colts won Super Bowl XLI over the Bears and remember how they beat tough-as-nails Baltimore on the road in the divisional playoff and nemesis New England in the AFC championship.

Against the Ravens, Indianapolis led 12-6 with 7:39 left in the fourth quarter. The Colts had the ball at their own 36-yard line, and Manning needed to find a way to keep the ball out of the hands of Steve McNair—his 2003 co-MVP—for a last-gasp drive. Even though McNair had played poorly

for 3½ quarters, he specializes in two-minute drives to win games, and the Ravens' top-rated defense dug in to give their quarterback one more chance. Manning's job was to eat up the clock. He could do it by throwing quick in-cuts to Reggie Wayne or Dallas Clark, or he could spread the field, giving the impression he might throw and then let his offensive line try to blast a few holes for Rhodes. Here came

Rhodes. For three. For five. For six.

But then Rhodes was stopped for minus-three, creating an obvious passing down on second-and-13. Manning came to the line, looked at his options, expected the Ravens would blanket his security blanket, Clark, and . . . gave it to Rhodes again. For eight. "That's what got me excited that day," said center Jeff Saturday. "Here we were with everyone thinking pass, and Peyton's got the faith in our line and our back to run it."

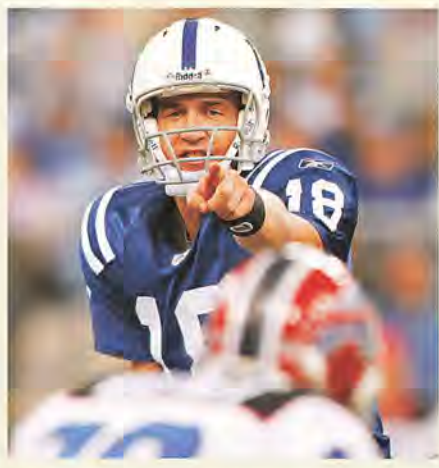
Fast-forward to third-and-five, 3:57 left. Failure by Manning here would give McNair one more shot at a miracle; success would drive a stake into the Ravens' heart. With cornerback Corey Ivy covering Clark (a cornerback on a tight end is an offense's biggest mismatch), Manning wedged a quick out into Clark's hands for a gain of 14. After six more runs to wind down the clock, Adam Vinatieri's 35-yard field goal clinched it.

On to the AFC title game. Against the Patriots, the Colts led

34-31 with 1:53 left to play, and Indianapolis had the ball at New England's 11-yard line. Manning, to this point in the drive, had thrown four passes for 57 yards to get Indy in position to tie the game or win it.

(Timeout here for an explanation of how the Colts' offense works: Offensive coordinator Tom Moore calls a play, but Manning has the ability at any time to change it, and he often does. Sometimes he will change the play more than once at the line of scrimmage 10 seconds before the snap. "Remember," Saturday said, "Peyton's the one dialing the plays up, and look what he called.")

Addai behind right tackle for five. Addai up the middle



"Understand something: Peyton wants to run it," says Mudd. "He organizes our offense unselfishly so we won't have bad plays."

Calling plays or finding receivers downfield, Manning turns the tables on a defense.

for three. And Addai—behind a block by Saturday that obliterated nosetackle Vince Wilfork—for three more yards and the winning touchdown.

"Peyton takes criticism that's unjust," said Saturday. "Look at that drive. You're telling me he couldn't have thought of a pass to get us into the end zone? Of course he could. But on the three biggest plays of the year for us, he hands it off."

And at least one of those plays was designed as a pass,

according to offensive line coach Howard Mudd. "See," says Mudd, who has been with the Colts since Manning's rookie year, in 1998, "that's part of the brilliance of Peyton. And that's part of his maturation as a player. Understand something: He wants to run it. He looks at the defense, he sees what's better at that moment in time, and he does what's best for the offense. He'll come to the bench a lot of times and say, 'Hey, why aren't we running it more?' Is that the

MARVELOUS MARVIN

MARVIN HARRISON IS QUIETLY MAKING HIS MARK ON NFL HISTORY

HALF-NAKED. Marvin Harrison stands at his locker in the RCA Dome, his back to a crowd of reporters. They are all trolling for quotes and anecdotes to pump some life into their stories about the latest win by the Colts, but they don't approach Harrison. They know from long experience that he doesn't want to talk to them. That he won't talk to them. The wideout quickly and quietly tugs on black pants, ties the laces of his black shoes, buttons a black shirt over his six-foot, 185-pound frame, wriggles into a black jacket, tugs a black baseball cap down low on his forehead and darts out of the locker room. His only words are a whispered goodbye to three security guards.

Harrison, 34, will someday retire as one of the greatest players in NFL history—and possibly its most inscrutable star. Over his 11 seasons with the Colts, he has averaged 93 catches a year, an NFL record. He has teamed up with Peyton Manning for 878 receptions and 106 touchdowns, both records for a quarterback-receiver tandem. Yet off the gridiron Harrison is uneasy in a crowd, especially when he's the center of attention. The eight-time Pro Bowl player sometimes goes several weeks without agreeing to do even the most perfunctory postgame interviews. Basic football-related questions from reporters can bring terse responses, and personal information is treated as if it were a state secret. He declines to give a reporter contact information for his mother, saying, with a smile, "She talks too much." Teammates and coaches see him at practices and team meetings but seldom anywhere else. "He's like Batman," linebacker Cato June says. "I don't know if I've ever seen him sit down and eat a meal."

Backup wideout Aaron Moorehead is one of Harrison's closest teammates, but it took more than a year for him to penetrate Harrison's shield. When he did, Moorehead discovered an engaging personality, a shrewd businessman—especially in real estate—and a boxing connoisseur. "Some people think he's not outgoing enough," Moorehead says, "but it's fun to be around him. You have to understand that he has certain boundaries. He's not going to open up to just anybody."

Harrison's accomplishments speak for themselves. On Dec. 10 in Jacksonville he became the fourth player to reach 1,000 receptions. The catch came in his 167th game, 14 fewer than it took Jerry Rice to hit that mark. Harrison is essentially competing as much with history as with his contemporaries. Next season he should pass Tim Brown (third alltime with 1,094 catches) and Cris Carter (second, 1,101).

On those rare occasions when he does talk, Harrison speaks softly and deliberately. "People put me into their own categories," he says. "I

don't like to talk in front of too many people. I'm not going to be the one in the locker room who's the center of attention. I'm not going to be loud, but I do talk."

He was a boy of few words, in contrast to his younger sister and brother. "They wanted to sing," says Linda Harrison, his mother. "They wanted to perform in front of people. You could never get him to do any of that."

Harrison is such a complete player that it's difficult to identify his strongest asset. He is perhaps the NFL's best route runner, with a genius for the subtle change of tempo or small head fake that throws off a defender. "He can run a hook route and make it a piece of art," says Indy receivers coach Clyde Christensen. "Everyone else just runs 12 yards and hooks. He may run five hooks that all

have their own little touch to 'em. Like an artist."

Art, of course, is subjective. Manning considers Harrison's best quality to be his indefatigability. Bengals scout Duke Tobin (whose father, Bill, drafted Harrison) believes it's his ability to quickly shift gears. Colts president Bill Polian marvels at how Harrison snatches balls out of the air like a pigeon plucking crumbs off the asphalt. ("The fastest hands I've ever seen," Polian says.) And Indy offensive coordinator Tom Moore lauds—irony alert—Harrison's ease in a crowd. "He can block out the whole stadium," Moore says. "He's got guys hanging on him, flashing in front of him, and all he sees is that football. It's just him and the football."

—Nunyo Demasio



HARRISON IS ON PACE TO BREAK MOST MAJOR RECEIVING RECORDS.

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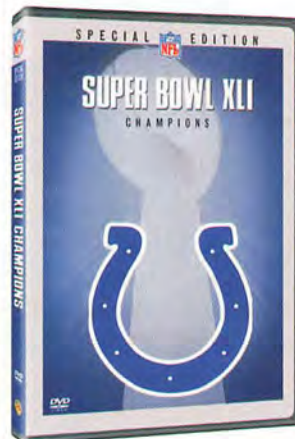
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sign of a guy who only wants to throw it? Peyton organizes our offense unselfishly so we won't have bad plays."

Wayne echoes the sentiment of Saturday and Mudd but also admits he's seen a changed Manning in recent years. "Maybe three years ago, two years ago, Peyton doesn't call three runs there," says Wayne. "Maybe he calls three passes. We're to the point now where he knows, hey, we've just got to win."

"IT'S FUNNY, I heard Reggie say that, and I have thought about it," Manning said during Super Bowl week. As Manning talked about past Patriots games, he compared the 2006 AFC championship to the regular-season game in 2003 when former defensive end Willie McGinest stopped the Colts on fourth-and-one at the goal line to win. In the last plays of the drive Indy completed a pass to the nine-yard line, then ran on second down and converted at the two. The Colts ran on

HARD TO HANDLE

SACK ARTIST AND QUARTERBACK BAITER DWIGHT FREENEY SOUNDS OFF

DWIGHT FREENEY respects Peyton Manning and likes him as a person, but "he's a *quarterback*," Freney says, enunciating the word with the same disdain that former president Bush reserved for *liberal*. "I mean, imagine going through life like that—having everything so easy, being so soft, wearing a different colored jersey in practice to symbolize you can't be touched. It pisses me off. And Peyton's a quarterback's son—he's been that way since birth!" Were Freney to play for another team, he says, "I'd have a giant picture of Peyton painted on the ceiling above my bed."

Lest Manning take it personally, Freney feels that way about *all* quarterbacks. "You have to realize what it's like for defensive players," Freney says. "We're all out there trying to get a chunk of change from Nike or Reebok, and then you find out that one of the best [defensive] players in the league, an All-Pro every year, is making way less on his [shoe company] deal than some quarterback who hasn't even taken his team to the playoffs. It's like, you get peanuts and Kyle Boller is eating chocolate-covered almonds."

The son of Jamaican-born parents, Freney was a goalkeeper on his high school soccer team in Bloomfield, Conn., until he switched sports before his sophomore season at the urging of the football coach, who loved his size and speed. After earning high school All-America honors, he went to Syracuse, where as a junior he had 4½ sacks in a breathtaking game against fleet-footed Virginia Tech quarterback Michael Vick and as a senior led the nation with 17½. Timed at 4.38 seconds in the 40 by scouts before the 2002 draft, the 6' 1", 265-pound Freney figured he was a surefire first-rounder before he began hearing the noise from draftniks about his size. "I was getting murdered," Freney says. "After listening to Mel Kiper, I didn't know I'd made a play in college."

Colts president Bill Polian and his newly hired coach, defensive guru Tony Dungy, however, had a different opinion of Freney and took him with the 11th pick. He quickly made his new bosses look good, finishing third in the NFL with 13 sacks as a rookie despite starting only eight

games. Reversing years of "bigger is better" coaching groupthink, the relatively small but explosive Freney was blowing past massive offensive tackles as if he were in a FasTrak toll lane.

By now Freney, whose mother, Joy, was a Jamaican Olympic prospect in the 400-meter dash, has proved that speed kills against bigger opponents; indeed, he's smoked more fatties than Bob Marley. Freney has a career average of .715 sacks per game (56½ sacks in 79). He's been told that one team prepared for him by having a defensive back line up for

the scout team at right defensive end—two steps offside.

Were Freney relying on speed alone, he'd be hard enough to contain; throw in his array of killer moves, including a 360-degree spin, and he's an opposing coach's biggest headache. And like his idol, Hall of Fame linebacker Lawrence Taylor, Freney is adept at stripping the ball, whipping his arm like a windmill as he descends upon the quarterback. Already he has forced 27 fumbles in his career, including three against Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer in a 34-16 Monday-night win on Dec. 18.

Says Dungy, "I compare him to Randy Moss in that even when he doesn't make a play, he has an impact on games because of the way teams adjust to his presence."

Because teams use backs and tight ends as extra blockers on Freney, his linemates are being single-blocked—fellow end Robert Mathis, not Freney, actually led the team in sacks, with 9½—and the Colts' linebackers and defensive backs have fewer receivers to cover. While Manning and All-Pro wideout Marvin Harrison remain the team's marquee players, Freney and his fellow defenders are fast gaining respect.

"They've certainly taken a lot of heat over the years, but right now they have a little swagger to them," Manning says of his teammates on defense. "I like that they're getting attention. It's about time."

You know what Freney would say to that. *Yeah, whatever—quarterback.*

—Michael Silver



THOUGH UNDERSIZED, FREENEY USES HIS SPEED TO BEAT DOUBLE AND TRIPLE TEAMS.



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the next two plays, only gaining a yard. On third down Manning called a pass that fell incomplete. With one play left, he decided to run, and McGinest met Edgerrin James for no gain. "To say that I have changed in my philosophy since then would probably be untrue. The simple fact is that three years ago we got stuffed. Two weeks ago we got the ball in the end zone using really the same running plays."

But here is the difference: Three years ago, on first-and-10 from the New England 11, Manning almost certainly wouldn't have called three consecutive running plays to score. As one teammate said the week before the Super Bowl, "Peyton just trusts the running game now more than he has, even though we've lost Edgerrin James. Part of that is because he sees the defense can never play eight in the box down at the 10-, eight-yard line. They know there's too much of a chance he's going to throw it down there, obviously. So he sees the creases in the defense. He knows it's better to make a sure three yards than to throw, even if it's 50-50 or better that he can complete it."

The maturation of Manning, Mudd calls it. Says Manning, "If the defense is playing zone coverage and it's fourth-and-goal, I will check to that run play all the time. Doing that, you're putting the hat on the offensive line and the running backs to get in there and get it done. Jeff Saturday's block on Vince Wilfork on the third-down play near the goal line to me is one for the ages. Saturday wants the ball to be called right up behind him, and Dominic and Joe are getting into the end zone. I think that the execution is better than it has been in years past."

Manning trusts the running game more, and it is, 15 of 16 times in the two most important drives of the year, what he relied on to win.

EXACTLY TWO HOURS and 10 minutes before the divisional playoff game in Baltimore on Jan. 13, Manning walked onto the field at M&T Bank Stadium with Wayne and Marvin Harrison. Some of the players from each team hadn't arrived at the stadium yet, but here were three Colts, ready to work. There were a few yellow-coated security people on the field and a few league officials, but no one else. Manning and his receivers went through their route tree, the same way they do before every game.



"I have never left the field saying I could have done more to get ready for a game," says Manning. "That gives me peace of mind."

The cerebral and meticulous Tony Dungy is a perfect fit for Manning, the thinking man's QB.

One hundred and thirty minutes before kickoff, Manning threw a short out to one side, then the other, and then a skinny post, and then four sideline throws, and more, and more, for 40 minutes.

Reflecting on this scene—and on so many since Manning entered the league in 1998—it's hard to believe Manning did not win an NFL championship until age 30.

Think back on his life. As a preteen in New Orleans, his favorite pastime (when he wasn't playing quarterback) was sitting next to his father, Archie, and watching reel after reel of game film. All of his life, Manning has practiced the right way, played the right way and studied the right way. On the stadium turf in Baltimore, all the old habits were evident. Every step, every throw, every choice was made because the only way he knows how to prepare is to leave absolutely nothing to chance. As obsessive-compulsive as Manning may seem, who is the quarterback all young quarterbacks want to model themselves after? Tom Brady, some would say. But that's for clutch greatness, not necessarily mechanical greatness. Now that Manning has won a championship, everything that appeared so overpracticed seems like bricks in the wall of a well-constructed quarterback.

When Manning is asked if he feels pressure in the big games—the ones he had been criticized for not winning until now—he answers the same way almost every time. Which is to say, not really.

"Chuck Noll said, 'Pressure is something you feel only when you don't know what you are doing,'" Manning said. "That's how I feel. I get prepared. I prepare as hard as

I possibly can. Sure you feel nervous, you feel anxious, but I don't feel pressure because I feel that I have done everything I could to be prepared for that game. There have been plenty of games where I have said that I wish that I could have this throw back or I wish that I would have seen that linebacker, and it just didn't happen. But I have never left the field saying I could have done more to get ready for a game. That gives me peace of mind."

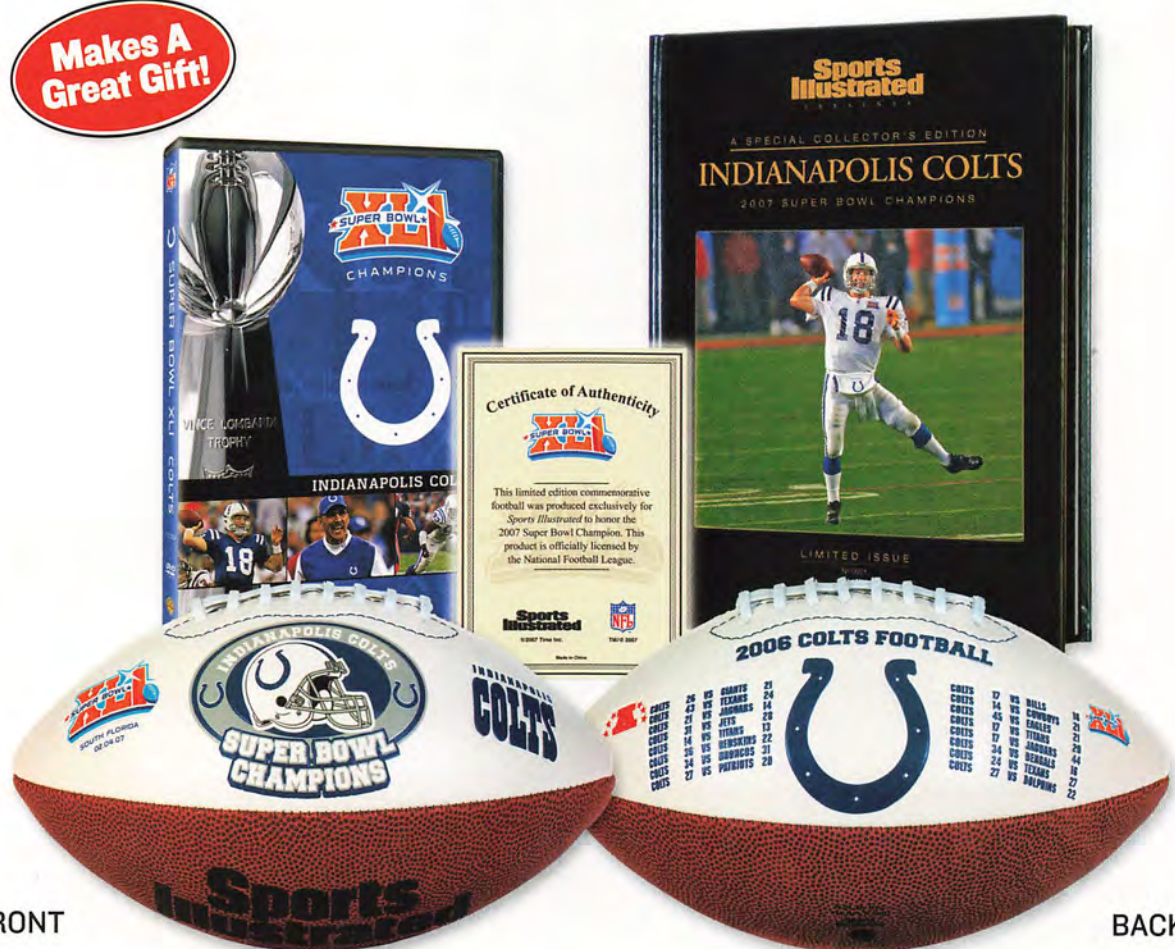
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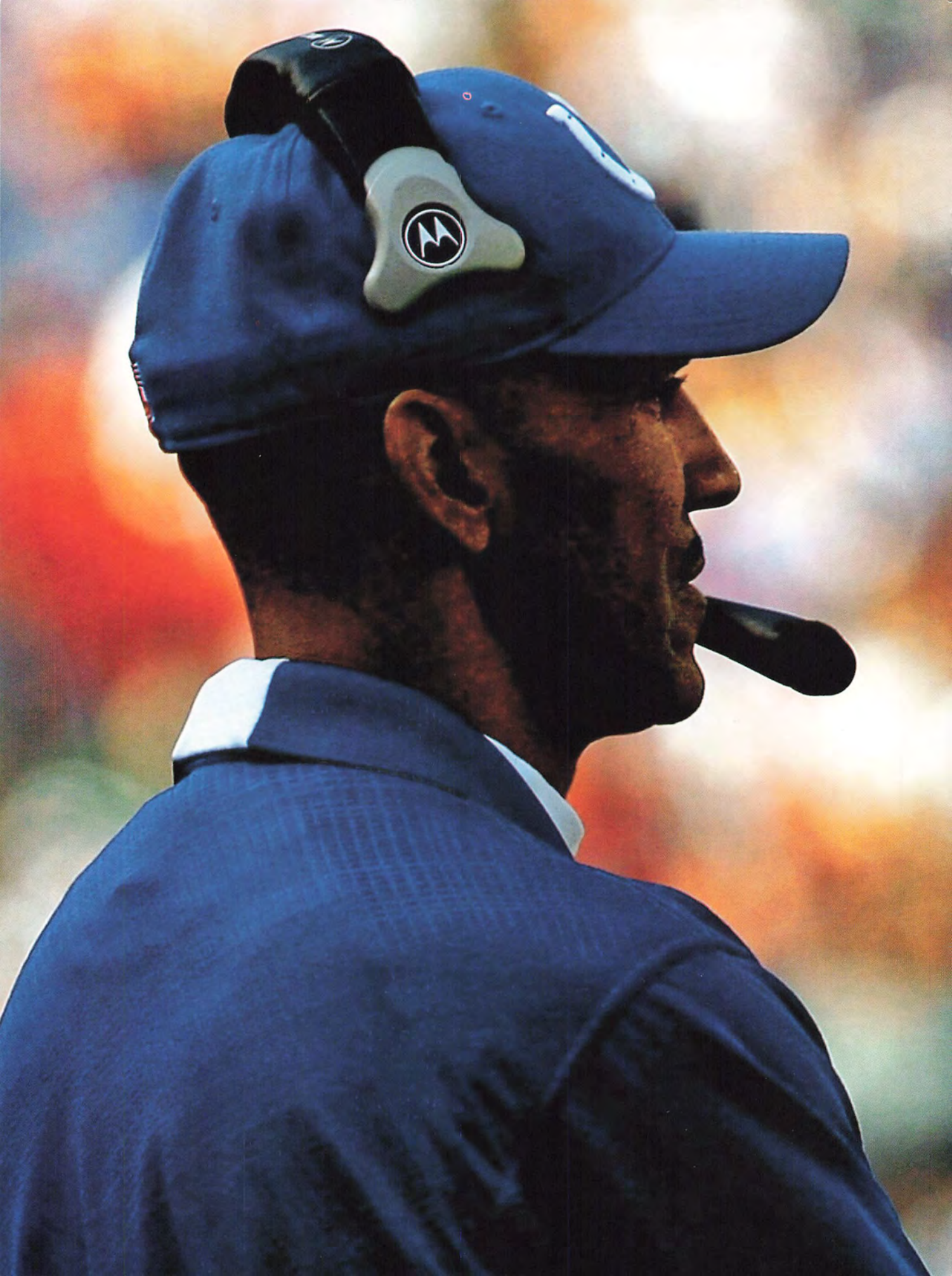
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OF THE NFL'S GREATEST COACHES—
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b y N u n y o D e m a s i o

DUNGY STARTED DEVELOPING HIS STYLE AS A HIGH SCHOOL QB IN JACKSON, MICH.

Photograph by Al Bello/Getty Images

BEFORE Tony Dungy was interviewed for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' head-coaching job in January 1996, a screw from his eyeglasses fell out and was lost. It left him without use of the left sidepiece, which hooked over his ear. • Dungy didn't intend to wear the spectacles when he went to

meet general manager Rick McKay at his Santa Clara Marriott suite. But at the start of the interview, because his eyesight is so poor, Dungy put on the busted glasses to avoid squinting.

Soon, the spectacles were askew—the nosepiece was diagonal, instead of on the bridge of Dungy's nose. The coach appeared to be oblivious, locking eyes with his interviewer. But roughly 30 minutes into the session, McKay stopped Dungy mid-sentence.

"Coach, you have to take those glasses off," McKay implored. "They are driving me nuts."

Tony Dungy doesn't fit the profile of an NFL head coach. He is a genteel fellow with a strong faith and is unapologetic about football's being secondary in his life. The 51-year-old has never adhered to conventional coach-think. So having his glasses askew during a make-or-break interview certainly didn't make him, well, blink.

"It was typical Tony," McKay—now Atlanta's general manager—recalls, laughing. "He wasn't worried about how he appeared. He was just going to tell you how he operated."

Dungy's vision was affirmed on Feb. 4 at Dolphin Stadium with Indy's victory over Chicago in Super Bowl XLI. Dungy and his former Tampa assistant, Lovie Smith, were the first black coaches to reach the championship game in 87 NFL seasons.

By guiding the Colts to their first Super Bowl since 1971, Dungy has refuted the notion that his mild-mannered approach doesn't win championships. Instead, the victory enhances Dungy's place among coaching giants. This season Dungy supplanted Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs for the best record among active coaches: 114–62. Overall, Dungy's .648 winning percentage is surpassed only by those of John Madden, Vince Lombardi, George Allen, George Halas and Don Shula. In 11 NFL seasons (six in Tampa, five in Indianapolis) Dungy's teams have made the playoffs nine times, including eight straight. The only coach with a longer streak is Tom Landry at nine.

During his Tampa tenure (1996–2001) Dungy engineered

one of the most remarkable turnarounds in NFL history while revolutionizing the Cover Two defense before it became all the rage. He has also made an impact by nurturing a blue-chip coaching tree that has substantially boosted the NFL's number of black head coaches. Dungy and his former assistants account for four of the league's six black coaches.

Yet one of Dungy's most impressive accomplishments

simply has been winning without amending his contrarian ways. Dungy is the opposite of the irascible, militaristic coach who has no life while overseeing a clandestine operation. He is outspoken about social issues; he's heavily involved in charities, particularly Christian groups.

"I never thought about changing, never felt the need to change," says Dungy, who once considered quitting to work in prison ministry. "I knew we could win this way."

Unlike many of his colleagues, Dungy encourages his coaches to spend time with their families instead of keeping nocturnal office hours. He doesn't use fear—or expletives—to motivate players. "Dungy is more of a friend," kicker Adam Vinatieri explains.

Yet Dungy is as much of a disciplinarian as any NFL tyrant. During his tenure the Colts have been among the least penalized teams in the league. His easy manner doesn't stop him from setting high standards and demanding

accountability. "He doesn't yell, or at least he doesn't yell often," Peyton Manning says. "But I've seen him get angry. And like anyone who is even-tempered, it really has an effect."

On the sideline Dungy remains stoic, regardless of the situation. "Coach Dungy is so calm, even in the worst moments," defensive end Dwight Freeney marvels. "When everyone else is frantic and running around, all you have to do is look at him."

Dungy's style evokes Landry, the Cowboys icon who coached for 20 straight winning seasons, collecting two Super Bowls. Dungy feels a kinship with his former coach Chuck Noll, under whom he played and later worked as an assis-



"I never thought about changing," says Dungy, who once considered working in prison ministry. "I knew we could win this way."

Dungy was hired as head coach by Bucs owner Malcolm Glazer in '96 and fired six years later.

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Peter King explains what Dallas will do with its head coaching vacancy



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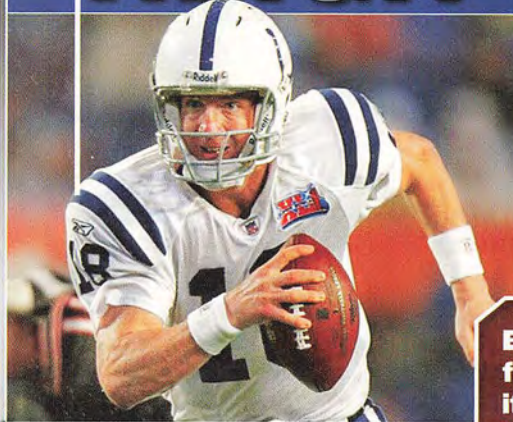
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tant. Dungy was a reserve safety for the Steel Curtain in 1977 and '78, then was traded to the 49ers and retired one season later. Although Noll won four Super Bowls in the '70s, he always told players that football should be merely a springboard to grander aspirations. "I never felt I had to change, because that's the way Coach Noll was," says Dungy, the third person to both play on and coach winning Super Bowl teams. "And I saw a guy who won four Super Bowls, [yet] always talked about football not really being your life's work."

The philosophy that Dungy brings to coaching actually originated with his late father, Wilbur, a college biology professor, and was reinforced by his football coach at Parkside High (Jackson, Mich.), where he starred at quarterback. Both men emphasized that the best leaders deflect credit and motivate their charges without bullying them.

Dungy's disposition—and defensive background—appealed to Colts owner Jim Irsay and team president Bill Polian when they hired him in January 2002, eight days after he was dismissed by Tampa following the club's third straight playoff loss. Dungy—who inherited a 6-10 team with an explosive offense—was a counterbalance to his predecessor, Jim Mora, who was known for emotional outbursts.

Today, Dungy is 68-24 overall at Indy, including 8-4 in the post-season. But the Colts' adjustment to his style, he concedes, was a "slow process." Although Indy won 10 games in Dungy's first season, it lost 41-0 to the Jets in a wild-card game. Several days later, then Colts kicker Mike Vanderjagt told a Toronto-based sports TV network, "Coach Dungy, he's just a mild-mannered guy. He doesn't get too excited. He doesn't get too down. And I don't think that works. I think you need a guy who's going to get in somebody's face when they're not performing well enough." (Early this season Vanderjagt was released in Dallas by in-your-face coach Bill Parcells.)

The Colts suffered playoff losses to the Patriots after the 2003 and '04 seasons, but Dungy's most disappointing year was '05, when Indianapolis flirted with a perfect season, winning its first 13. The Colts finished 14-2 before being stunned at home by Pittsburgh in the second playoff round.

The season was overshadowed, however, by the suicide of Dungy's 18-year-old son, James, on Dec. 22, 2005. Dungy

viewed the death through a religious prism—a test of his beliefs. "I always thought the Super Bowl was great," says Dungy, who has four other children with his wife, Lauren. "But it's not the most important thing in the world."

DUNGY LANDED his first NFL gig in 1981, when Noll hired him as a defensive assistant at age 25. He was the youngest assistant in NFL history—and one of only 14 black coaches. By 1984 Dungy was promoted to defensive coordinator and was considered destined to be a head coach. But the tag lasted for more than a decade.

During one job interview Dungy was asked for the racial breakdown of his prospective staff. Another time, a G.M. insisted that Dungy shave his beard. Perhaps his most telling experience was in January 1988, when Dungy was among 15 candidates interviewed by Green Bay. Dungy detected that he was a token after the organization revealed that it sought an offensive-minded person—with head-coaching experience.

When Dungy was a Vikings defensive coordinator in the 1990s, the knock was that he didn't interview well. Dungy's candor certainly didn't help. The coach would reveal that he planned to occasionally drive his kids to school instead of being at work early. When one owner asked if the job would be the most important thing in his life, Dungy said no. "I didn't think I was going to get that job," he says, laughing. "And I didn't."

Even when Dungy landed the Tampa Bay job, it reportedly came after Jimmy Johnson and Steve Spurrier declined. But Dungy was the ideal coach for a franchise that

had suffered 13 straight losing seasons. The Bucs made the playoffs in four of six seasons after he redesigned the Cover Two to make it more effective, calling it the Tampa Two.

Dungy's staff in Tampa included Smith, Herman Edwards (Kansas City's head coach), Rod Marinelli (Detroit) and Mike Tomlin (Pittsburgh). They are all versed in the Tampa Two. But Dungy's coaching tree goes beyond X's and O's. And his disciples have adopted his vision.

"To have that resonate," Dungy says, "that you can be good, that you can win, that you can be successful, and you don't have to live and die and eat and sleep football, I'm proud of that, too."



"Coach Dungy is so calm," says Freeney. "When everyone is frantic and running around, all you have to do is look at him."

Dungy has taught his defense to players and assistants, four of whom became head coaches.



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A full-page action photograph of Marshall Faulk, a running back for the Indianapolis Colts, in mid-air catching a football. He is wearing a blue and white striped Colts jersey with the number 32, a white helmet with the Colts horseshoe logo, and blue wristbands. His hands are reaching up to catch the ball. Other players in blue and white uniforms are visible in the background, also in motion.

MARSHALL FAULK

RB | INDY CAREER: 1994-98

HIGHLIGHTS: Rookie of the Year (1994)

FEW RUNNING BACKS have started with more flash. Faulk, the No. 2 pick in the 1994 NFL draft, spent his first five seasons in Indy piling up numbers: 297 receptions and 42 rushing touchdowns. In 1998 he finished with 2,227 total yards (1,319 rushing and 908 receiving).

Photograph by Chuck Solomon

THE G R E A C O L T S O F T H E

WHO ARE THE BEST COLTS TO PLAY IN INDIANA?



TEST INDY ERA

HERE ARE SI'S PICKS ||||| *Compiled by Richard Deitsch*

MIKE PETERSON

LB | CAREER: 1999–2002

HIGHLIGHTS: 528 tackles, seven interceptions, 27 double-digit-tackle games

A **FLASHY** and aggressive linebacker, Peterson led the Colts in tackles in 2000 and '02. He became a starter as a rookie and held that job until he left for Jacksonville in '03.

Photograph by
AJ Mast/Icon SMI



JEFF HERROD

LB | CAREER: 1988–96, '98

HIGHLIGHTS: AP All-Pro honorable mention (1990, '92)

OVER HIS 10 seasons in Indianapolis, Herrod was a constant force at linebacker. A ninth-round pick in the 1988 draft, Herrod started 13 or more games in eight seasons. He led Indy in tackles seven times.

Photograph by
Don Larson/WireImage.com

THE ALLTIME COLTS TEAM

From Harrison to Hinton, Indy's Colts have made their mark in the NFL

OFFENSE

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------|---|
| QB PEYTON MANNING | 1998– | Begins '07 with 144 regular-season consecutive starts |
| RB MARSHALL FAULK | 1994–98 | Still third alltime among Colts rushers (5,320 yards) |
| RB EDGERRIN JAMES | 1999–2005 | Franchise alltime rushing leader rumbled for 1,553 yards as a rookie |
| WR MARVIN HARRISON | 1996– | First receiver to have four straight 100-catch seasons (1999–2002) |
| WR REGGIE WAYNE | 2001– | His numbers so far: 390 catches for 5,474 yards and 37 touchdowns |
| TE KEN DILGER | 1995–2001 | Sure-handed receiver had 261 receptions for 3,181 yards and 18 TDs |
| OL CHRIS HINTON | 1983–89 | Six-time Pro Bowl selection at left tackle was acquired in Elway deal |
| OL TARIK GLENN | 1997– | Current left tackle has started 16 games nine out of 10 seasons |
| OL RAY DONALDSON | 1980–92 | Longtime center was voted to four consecutive Pro Bowls from '86 to '89 |
| OL JEFF SATURDAY | 1999– | Two-time Pro Bowl center—an explosive blocker—snaps to Manning |
| OL RON SOLT | 1984–88, '92 | One of three Pro Bowl linemen, with Donaldson and Hinton, in '87 |

DEFENSE

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|
| DE CHAD BRATZKE | 1999–2003 | Led team in sacks in 1999 (12), 2000 (7.5) and '01 (8.5) |
| DE DWIGHT FREENEY | 2002– | Has 56.5 sacks in five seasons—including a league-best 16 in 2004 |
| DE DONNELL THOMPSON | 1981–91 | Started 143 of 146 games in 11 seasons; finished with 40 career sacks |
| LB DUANE BICKETT | 1985–93 | The NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year made the Pro Bowl in '87 |
| LB JEFF HERROD | 1988–96, '98 | Underrated linebacker was 243rd player selected in '88 draft |
| LB BARRY KRAUSS | 1979–88 | Carryover from the Baltimore era had 175 tackles in '85 and '86 |
| LB MIKE PETERSON | 1999–2002 | Had 27 double-digit tackle games; career-best 18 at Tennessee in '02 |
| CB RAY BUCHANAN | 1993–96 | Led team with eight interceptions in '94—including three for TDs |
| CB EUGENE DANIEL | 1984–96 | With 198 career games, he's second in club history to Johnny Unitas |
| S JASON BELSER | 1992–2000 | An eighth-round pick, he started 126 games and had 13 interceptions |
| S BOB SANDERS | 2004– | Pats quarterback Tom Brady called him "one of the best in the game" |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|--|
| P ROHN STARK | 1982–94 | Led NFL in punting average in three seasons (1983, '85 and '86) |
| K MIKE VANDERJAGT | 1998–2005 | Hit 217 of 248 field goals (87.5%); first in career points (995) |
| KR AARON BAILEY | 1994–98 | His 3,501 career return yards are best in franchise history |
| PR CLARENCE VERDIN | 1988–93 | Averaged 9.9 yards per return; a two-time Pro Bowl selection ('90, '92) |
| COACH TONY DUNGY | 2002– | A 60–20 regular-season mark; led Colts to playoffs in each of his five years |



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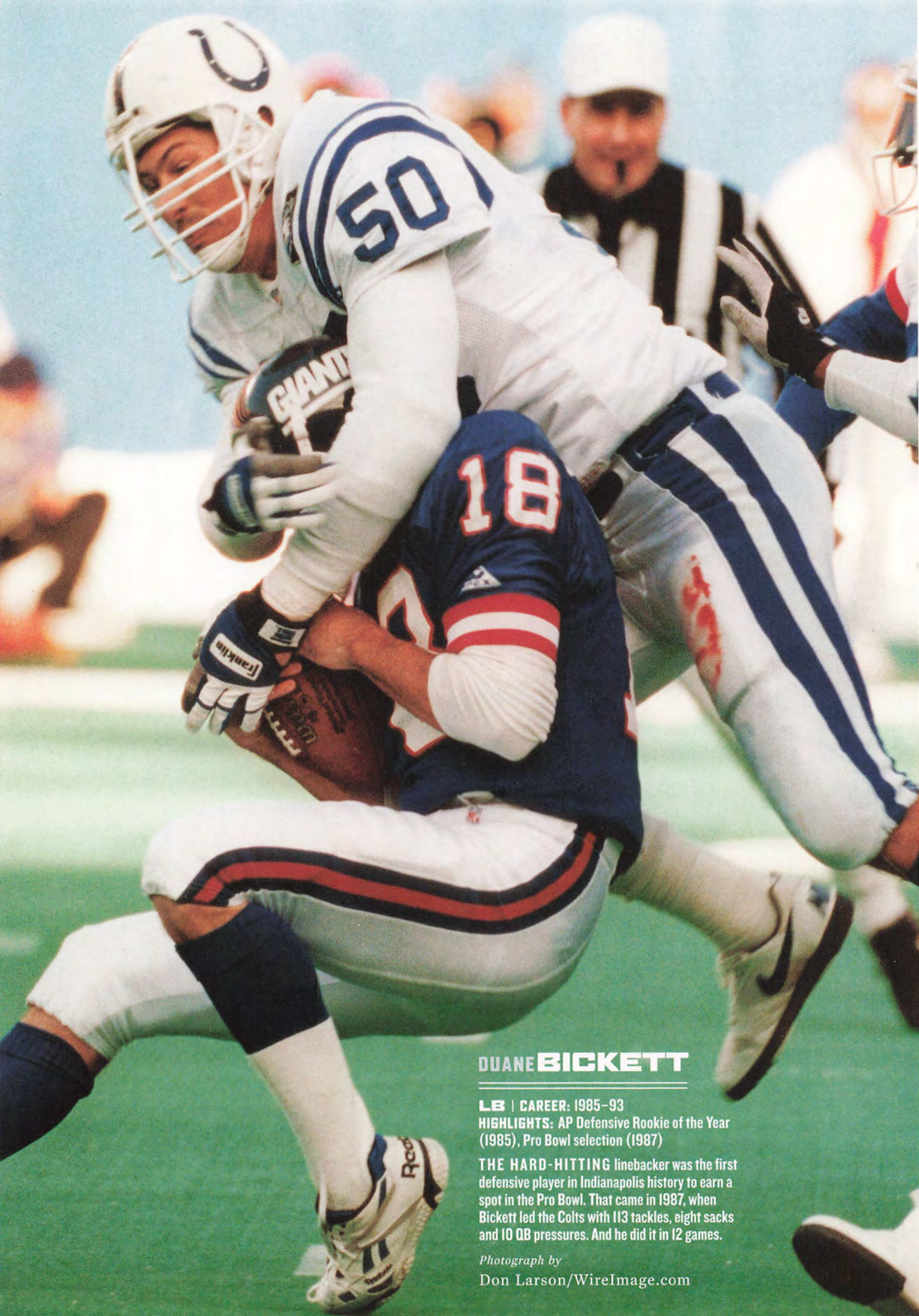
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DUANE BICKETT

LB | CAREER: 1985-93

HIGHLIGHTS: AP Defensive Rookie of the Year (1985), Pro Bowl selection (1987)

THE HARD-HITTING linebacker was the first defensive player in Indianapolis history to earn a spot in the Pro Bowl. That came in 1987, when Bickett led the Colts with 113 tackles, eight sacks and 10 QB pressures. And he did it in 12 games.

Photograph by

Don Larson/WireImage.com

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BOB SANDERS

FS | CAREER: 2004–
HIGHLIGHTS: Pro Bowl selection (2005)

AT 5' 8" AND 206 pounds, Sanders has the size of a sportswriter but plays far bigger than his frame. His return from an injury to his right knee gave the Colts a strong presence in the secondary. Sanders had a team-high eight tackles in the playoff win against the Ravens. Says Dwight Freeney, "He's a human cannonball."

Photograph by
Mike Moore/WireImage.com



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ROHN STARK

P | CAREER: 1982–94

HIGHLIGHTS: Franchise records: 45.9 yards per punt in '85, 225 punts inside the 20

ARGUABLY the best punter of his era, Stark averaged 43.8 yards per punt with the Colts. He had a team-record 15 games in which he averaged 50 or more yards.

Photograph by Jerry Wachter

CHRIS HINTON

LT | CAREER: 1983–89

HIGHLIGHTS: Six-time Pro Bowl selection

ACQUIRED IN the John Elway deal, Hinton (*above*) helped the Colts rebound in 1983 to go 7–9, the best turnaround for a winless team. Only Jim Parker appeared in more Pro Bowls among Colts offensive linemen.

Photograph by Manny Millan

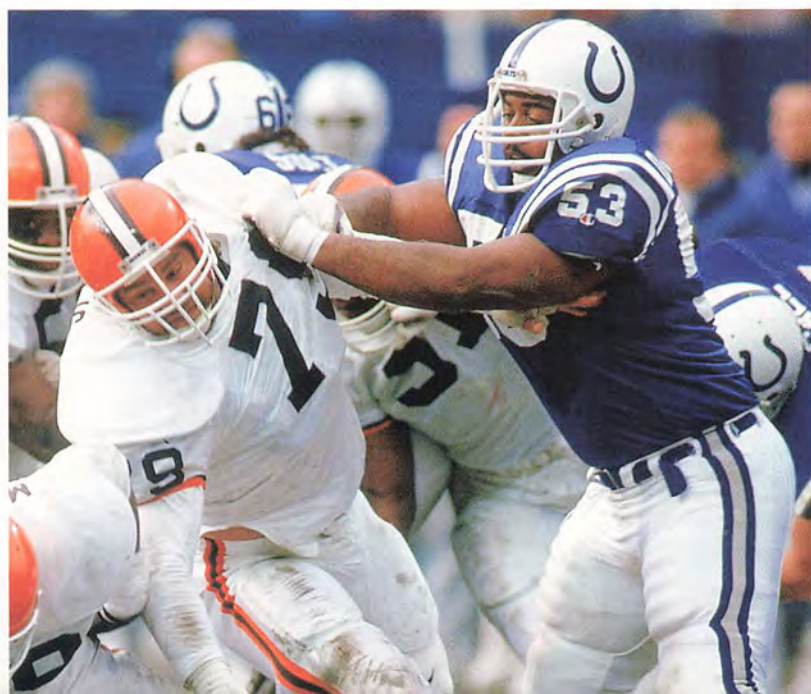
RAY DONALDSON

C | CAREER: 1980–92

HIGHLIGHTS: Four consecutive Pro Bowl selections (1986–89)

A RENOWNED run blocker, Donaldson (*below*) was the first African-American center to start a game in NFL history. He played in 184 games, the fifth most in franchise history.

Photograph by Tony Tomsic



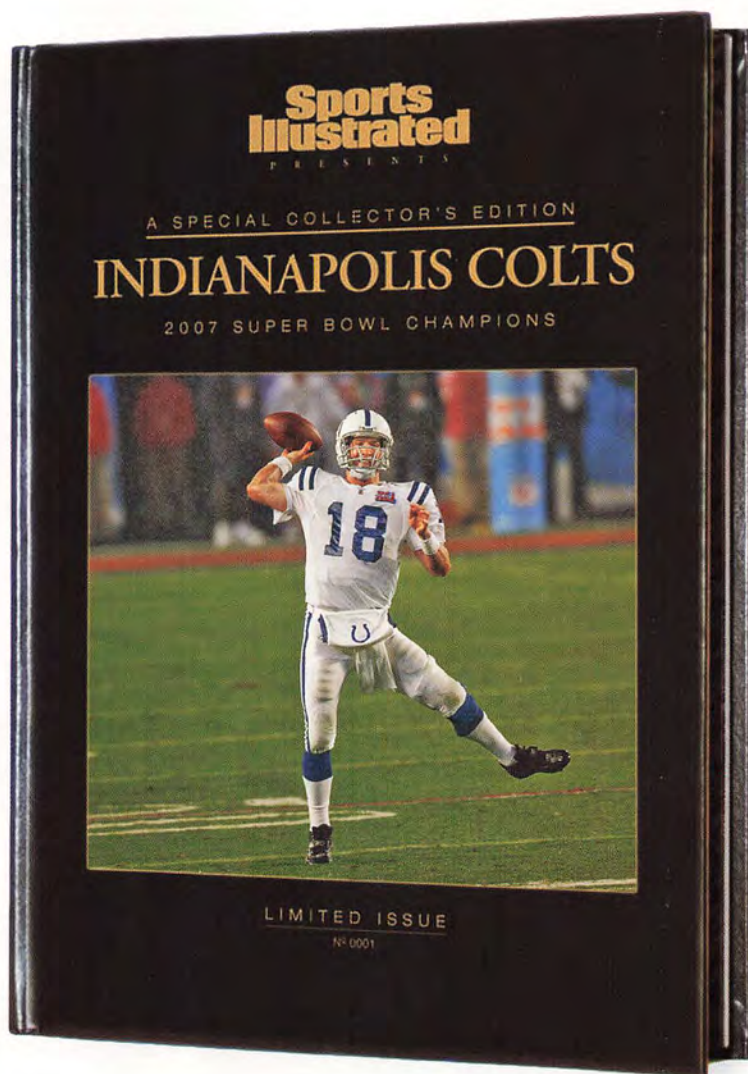
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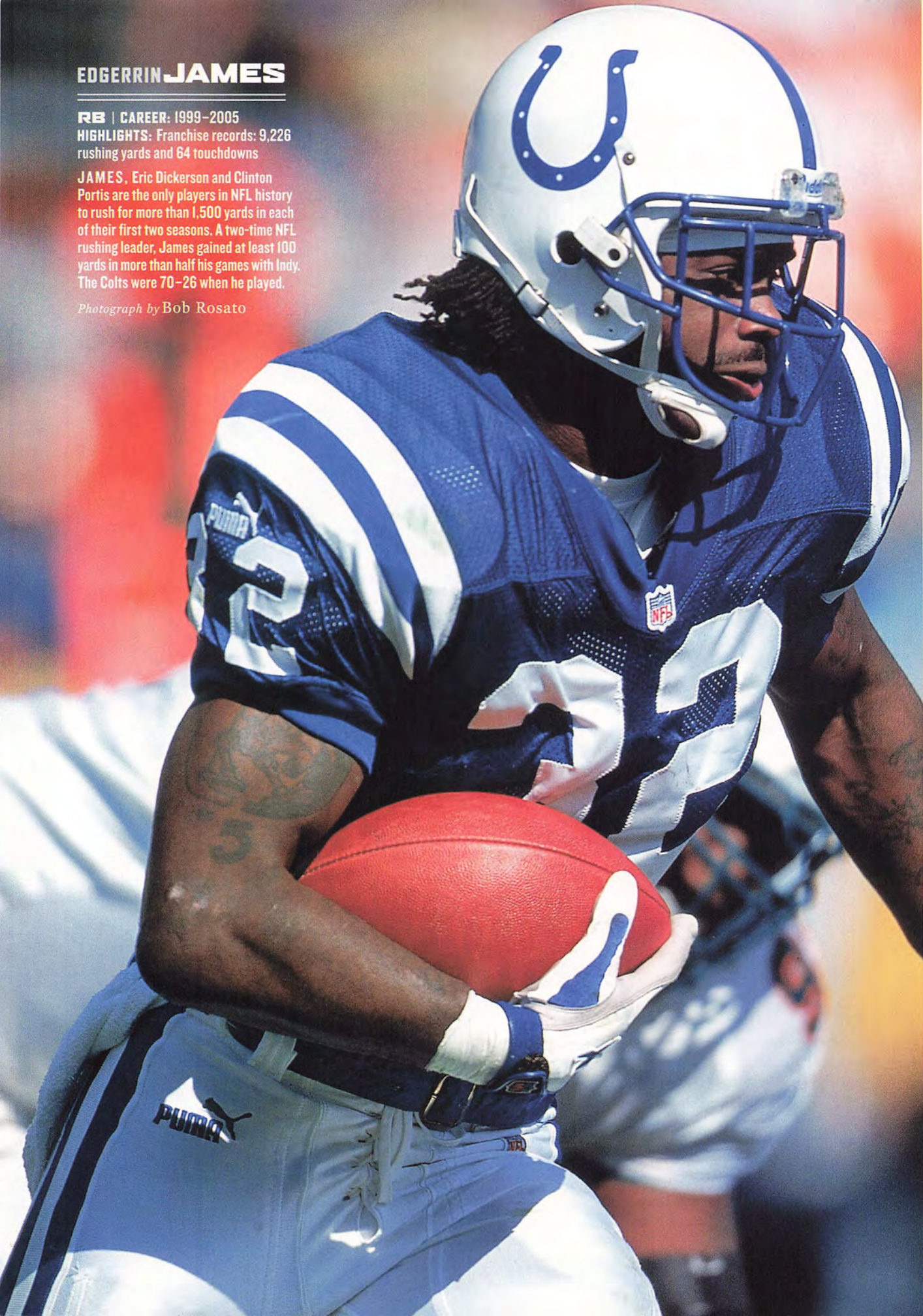
EDGERRIN JAMES

RB | CAREER: 1999-2005

HIGHLIGHTS: Franchise records: 9,226 rushing yards and 64 touchdowns

JAMES, Eric Dickerson and Clinton Portis are the only players in NFL history to rush for more than 1,500 yards in each of their first two seasons. A two-time NFL rushing leader, James gained at least 100 yards in more than half his games with Indy. The Colts were 70-26 when he played.

Photograph by Bob Rosato

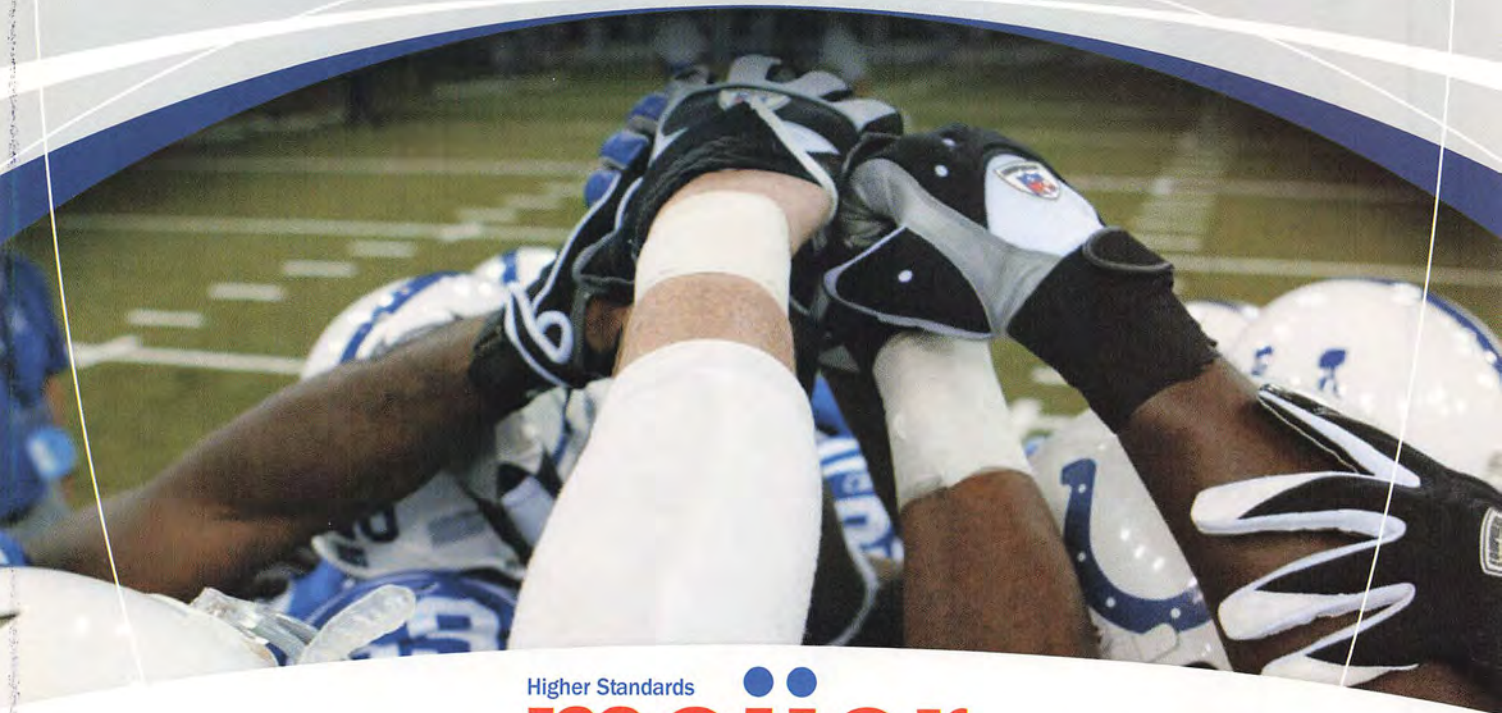




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Sports Illustrated

**SUPERBACK
ERIC DICKERSON
COMES TO
THE COLTS**

THE BIG DEAL



10094

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: RONALD G. MOORE (DICKERSON); DAMIAN STROMMEYER;
HEINZ KLUETMEIER; MICHAEL O'NEILL; AL TELEMANS; BOB ROSATO (2);
AL TELEMANS; JOHN BIEVER; BILL FRANKS (2)

NOVEMBER 9, 1987 In one of the biggest deals in league history, Eric Dickerson arrived from the Rams as part of a three-team trade.

FRONT AND CENTER THROUGH THE YEARS

IN THE TWO DECADES SINCE THE COLTS LANDED IN THE HOOSIER STATE, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED HAS HAD THEM COVERED |||| by Richard Deitsch



APRIL 30, 1990
Strong-armed Jeff George never lived up to his lofty draft status.



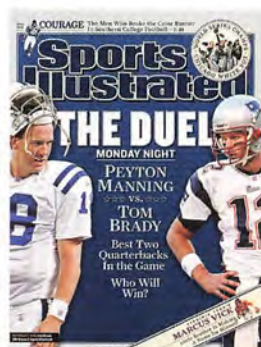
AUGUST 12, 1991
A wealthier Dickerson arrived in training camp.



SEPTEMBER 5, 1994
Will Wolford anchored the O-line during the mid-1990s.



NOVEMBER 22, 1999
Peyton Manning's second season brought new hope.



NOVEMBER 7, 2005
In a dream matchup, the Colts won 40-21.



OCTOBER 17, 2005
Dwight Freeney gave the Colts' D a new dimension.



DECEMBER 22, 2003
The Patriots ended a dream season for Manning.



DECEMBER 20, 2004
Manning broke Dan Marino's single-season TD record.



JANUARY 17, 2005
Reggie Wayne & Co. could not get past New England.



JANUARY 29, 2007
With a heart-stopping finish, Manning defeated the Pats.

1 INDIANAPOLIS Colt enshrined in the Hall of Fame (Eric Dickerson). There are nine Baltimore Colts in the Hall (Raymond Berry, Art Donovan, Weeb Ewbank, Ted Hendricks, John Mackey, Gino Marchetti, Lenny Moore, Jim Parker and Johnny Unitas).

11 SEASONS as an Indianapolis Colt by receiver Marvin Harrison (1996–present), the longest current tenure by a Colt. Unitas was a Baltimore Colt for 17 seasons (1956–72).

4 STRAIGHT division titles won by the Colts, tied with the Patriots for the longest active streak.

78 WEEKS (out of 85) that the Colts have held sole possession or shared the lead in the AFC South division since 2002.



BY THE NUMBERS

THE INDIANAPOLIS VERSION OF THE COLTS FEATURES A PROLIFIC QUARTERBACK-

TO-RECEIVER DUO AND OTHER FANTASTIC FIGURES ||||| *Compiled by David Sabino*



144 CONSECUTIVE games played by Peyton Manning, the longest streak by a quarterback from the start of his career.

89 REGULAR-SEASON victories since the start of the 1999 season, the most in the NFL.

12 MINIMUM number of wins by the Colts for four straight seasons (2003–06), tying the NFL record set by the Cowboys (1992–95).

3 TEAMS (Buccaneers, Colts and Cowboys) that have had winless seasons but eventually won the Super Bowl.

.648 CAREER winning percentage for Tony Dungy, the highest among active coaches with at least 50 wins through the 2006 regular season.

3,000 YARDS passing in each of Manning's first nine seasons, the only player in NFL history to do so.

4,000 YARDS passing during the 2006 season, an NFL-record seventh time Manning has reached the 4,000-yard mark in a season

.750 WINNING percentage for the Colts with Manning as quarterback and Dungy as coach, in 80 regular-season games. Only two other QB-coach combinations have higher winning percentages (among combinations with at least 50 games played since 1970): the Oakland Raiders' Ken Stabler and John Madden (.756 in 80 games) and the Chicago Bears' Jim McMahon and Mike Ditka (.754 in 61 games).

8 STRAIGHT years that Harrison has been voted to the Pro Bowl, tying Parker and Unitas for the franchise record.

106 TOUCHDOWN passes from Manning to Harrison, the most by any quarterback-wide receiver combination in NFL history. As a pair, Manning and Harrison also hold the records for most completions (878) and passing yards (11,909).

3 CONSECUTIVE seasons that the Indianapolis Colts have scored touchdowns more often than they have punted.



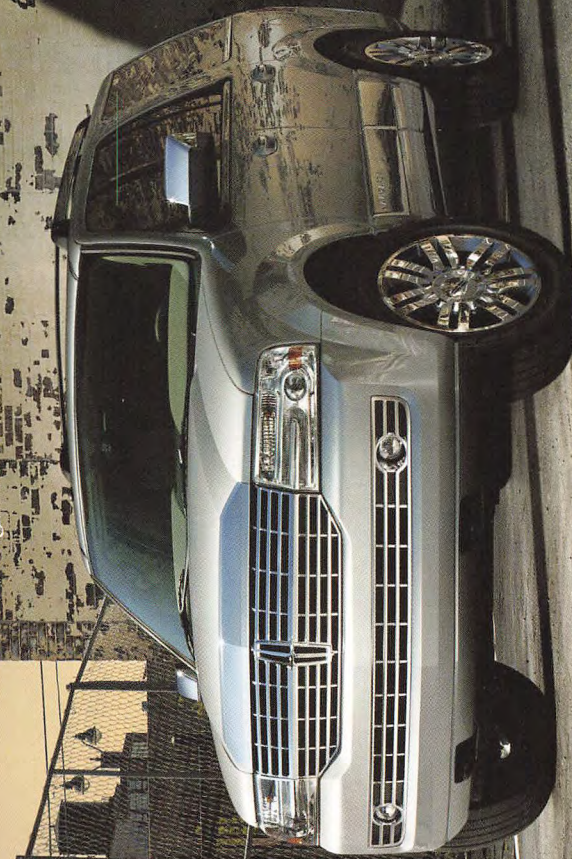
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I can't wait to get started.



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